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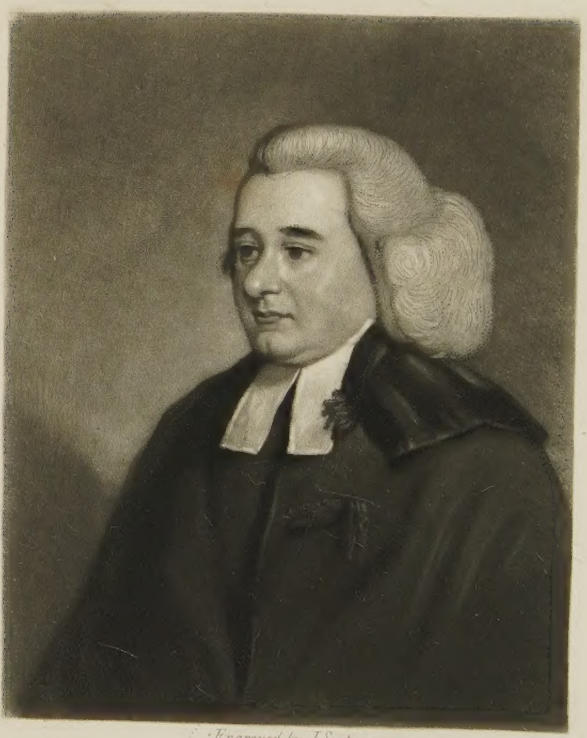

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REV. CHARLES NISBET, D.D.

MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. CHARLES NISBET, D.D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF

DICKINSON COLLEGE, CARLISLE.

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D.D.

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

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TO THE

SURVIVING RELATIVES

OF THE VENERABLE MAN WHOSE HISTORY AND

CHARACTER ARE HERE ATTEMPTED;

AND TO ALL THE

ADMIRERS OF HIS PIETY, GENIUS, WIT, AND

PROFOUND ERUDITION,

IN BOTH HEMISPHERES,

THIS VOLUME IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

Princeton, August 20, 1840.

351161

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ERRATA.

P. 242, l. 26, for *reasonable* read seasonable.
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MEMOIR OF DR. NISBET, &c.

CHAPTER I.

His Early Life.

The subject of the following Memoir was one of those great and good men, who have been called from spheres of usefulness and honour in Europe, to enrich the literature, and adorn the Church on this side of the Atlantic. And although, in his case, our country has been culpably tardy in paying her debt of respect and gratitude; yet that debt has been deeply felt, and often acknowledged; and if the formality of making a permanent record of it has been unduly postponed, the result has shown that the lapse of time, instead of consigning an elevated character, and important services to forgetfulness, has rather served to deepen the impression of them, and to give a testimonial of their value rather strengthened than weakened by being delayed.

By this delay, however, a serious disadvantage has been incurred. Almost all the contemporaries of the deceased have passed from the stage; and, of course, a large part of that information concerning his early life which might have been easily obtained from his

native country, thirty years ago, is now irrecoverably lost. But even with regard to this loss, there are counterbalancing considerations. Time has been left for the first fervour of feeling on the departure of an eminent man to subside. His character is now viewed with the calmness and impartiality of a long and leisurely retrospect. The statement and portrait about to be presented are not drawn under the painful and exciting impression of a recent bereavement. There has been time to consult the award of faithful public suffrage. Perhaps the most candid and impartial, if not the most feeling and racy biographical sketches, are those which have been formed many years after their subjects have passed from the stage of action. The erection of this humble memorial is reserved for one who knew the subject of it well, who venerates his memory; and who considers it as an honour to contribute any thing towards embalming the memory of so distinguished and worthy a man.

Charles Nisbet was born in Haddington, in Scotland, on the 21st day of January, A. D. 1736. He was the third son of *William Nisbet*, and *Alison*, his wife, who, for many years, resided in that place. His father had two other children besides Charles; one elder and the other younger. The elder was Andrew, afterwards the Rev. Andrew Nisbet, pastor of the parish of Garvald, in the Presbytery of Haddington, who never married, and who died several years before his brother Charles. The younger son was William, who devoted himself to mercantile pursuits, and who died about the time that Charles came to this country.

Of the occupation or circumstances of his Father

little is now known, excepting that they were not such as to admit of his sustaining his son in the more advanced stages of his education, when it was necessary for him to leave home, the advantages of which, nevertheless, that son was intent on enjoying. Accordingly he remained with his father until the sixteenth year of his age, diligently employed in studying the Latin and Greek languages, and the various elementary branches of knowledge which are considered as requisite to entering the university. In 1752, he entered the University of Edinburgh, and from this time he never more received from his father any pecuniary aid. Such was his thirst for knowledge, and such his ardour and energy of character, that immediately on going to Edinburgh, he made engagements as a private teacher, which enabled him to bear all the expenses of his College course. Even at such an early age did this remarkable youth give that evidence of accurate scholarship, dignity of demeanor, and capacity for instructing others, which gained at once the confidence of his friends, and introduced him to the means of independent and honourable subsistence.

How rarely is it that young men, in laying the foundations of their knowledge, are equally wise, or equally successful. A great majority of those who pass through a course of what is called liberal education, are so loose and careless in studying the elements of literature and science, that they are not sufficiently grounded in any one branch to be prepared for successfully teaching it. The consequences of this negligence are unhappy in a variety of ways.—When the foundations of knowledge are slightly and

superficially laid, the superstructure must ever partake of the same unsolid and insecure character. No one was ever strong in any branch of knowledge, in the elements of which he was weak. He who lays a deep and thorough foundation, has his work more than half done, and proceeds at every step afterwards with more ease, with more expedition, and with more firmness of advance. In this case, too, the student, if in straitened circumstances, or if suddenly reduced to the necessity of relying on his own efforts, is better prepared to go forth, and acquire, in the early morning and evening, by instructing others, what will sustain him the remainder of his time. This was the wisdom and happiness of young Nisbet, who, in the outset of his career, gave a very decided presage of that scholarship and extensive erudition, as well as force of mind, which afterwards rendered him one of the most remarkable men of his time.

Of the general character of young Nisbet's course in the University no record now remains. The proofs, however, of his accurate and mature scholarship are so many and unquestionable, that his undergraduate career must have been not only exemplary but highly honourable. He was graduated in the year 1754, in the eighteenth year of his age.*

Immediately on completing his course in the University, he entered the Divinity Hall in Edinburgh, as a student of Theology, with a view to the Gospel

* The year of his graduation is not certainly known. But, as he is said to have been six years in the Theological Hall, he must either have been graduated in the year above mentioned, or have entered the Theological Hall before his graduation, which is not probable.

Ministry. In this new situation he supported himself by an engagement as Editor of a popular periodical publication, the character of which, while he continued to preside over it, bore ample testimony to his intellectual and literary resources. Of his appearance in the Divinity Hall, the Rev. Samuel Martin, of Monimail, a respectable contemporary and fellow student, bears the following testimony. "The first time that I distinguished Dr. Nisbet was in the Divinity Hall at Edinburgh. Dr. Hamilton, our worthy and learned Professor, had appointed the impugning and defending a *Thesis*, according to mood and figure, in Latin. The Professor was an excellent Latin scholar himself, and seemed to be as much at his ease in Latin as in English. The shrewdness and ability, the command of argument and of language in Mr. Nisbet struck me much."

While Mr. Nisbet was a student in the Theological Hall, his private papers show that his mind was very seriously and solemnly exercised with respect to divine things. On the 10th of March, 1756, he recorded an act of solemn dedication to God, drawn in a spirit of enlightened and ardent devotion. And on the 18th of April, 1759, he drew up another paper, in a different form, but of similar import; both very strikingly evincing that while he was diligently engaged in studying Theology as a science, he was by no means forgetful of its practical and experimental influence on his own heart as a Christian.

In the Divinity Hall he continued to study, according to the excellent habit of his country, for six years. At the end of this time, on the 24th day of September, A. D. 1760, he was licensed to preach the

Gospel, by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, in the twenty-fourth year of his age.

Young Nisbet, in the course of his education, had become early and intimately acquainted with the late Dr. Witherspoon, who was about fourteen years older than himself. Under the direction of Dr. Witherspoon, indeed, some of his studies, especially that of the French language, had been conducted. The first sermon which Mr. Nisbet preached after being licensed was in the pulpit of his friend, then settled in Paisley, a flourishing town of Scotland, about fifty miles west of Edinburgh. These distinguished men continued to be affectionate friends until the death of Dr. Witherspoon, in 1794. And it is not at all improbable that their early friendship had considerable influence in inducing Mr. Nisbet to listen to an invitation to remove to the United States.

Mr. Nisbet's first engagement, as a stated preacher, was to supply a church in the Gorbals of Glasgow. Here he remained about two years. The congregation had stipulated, besides paying the salary mentioned in their call, to furnish him with a house. This stipulation, however, they had failed of fulfilling. Though their young preacher was highly acceptable and popular; yet as he had no family, and a domestic residence did not seem necessary for him, they postponed a compliance with their engagement. Receiving a call to another Church, he thought it his duty to remove. On taking leave of the congregation, he selected as a text for his farewell sermon, Acts xxviii. 30. *And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him.*

The call referred to in the preceding paragraph, was from the church of Montrose, a large and flourishing town on the east coast of Scotland, a royal borough, and a place of considerable importance both for its maritime trade and its valuable manufactures. This church was large, and embraced much cultivation and intelligence. Having been for some time in want of an Assistant to their aged and infirm Pastor, they applied to the Rev. Dr. Gillies, of Glasgow, to recommend to them a suitable candidate. The Doctor immediately named his young friend, Mr. Nisbet, as the most able and promising preacher he could think of. This nomination met with prompt acceptance, and immediate measures were taken by the church to present him a call. Mr. Nisbet thought it his duty to accept of it, and soon entered on his new charge. The right of patronage of this Parish was vested in the King—George III.—and the duty of taking the lead in measures to fill the vacancy, was committed to the Town Council.

As the documents which conveyed and authenticated this call, were in a form not very familiar to Presbyterians in the United States, where patronage is happily unknown; and as they are somewhat historical in their character, they are here given at large.

The original call from the Town Council of Montrose, is as follows:

"At Montrose, the twenty-sixth day of January, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-three years; which day the magistrates and remanent members of the Town Council of the said Burgh, being met and convened within the new Council House thereof, and

taking into their serious consideration that the office of an assistant or helper to Mr. John Cooper, first minister of the gospel of this Burgh, has been for some time vacant, by Mr. John Miller, his late assistant, being called to and now settled minister at Newburgh; and that by the agreement between the Council and Mr. Cooper, he empowers them to choose any person they shall think proper to be his assistant; and having had this day laid before them an extract of an act or report of the church session of this Burgh, dated the 25th day of January instant, bearing that the several members of session declared that, according to the best of their information, the congregation in general were well satisfied that Mr. Nisbet, preacher of the Gospel, should be settled Assistant, and that proper steps be taken for his being also successor to Mr. John Cooper. And the Council, having considered the said report, and also considering that the said Mr. Charles Nisbet has been, for some considerable time by-past, preacher of the Gospel at Gorbals, near Glasgow: And (as the Council are well informed), has discharged his office there to the satisfaction of his auditory; and that the Council has received a very agreeable character of his sufficiency from very competent judges; and they also considering that he had preached in the Church here, several times in the month of July, 1761, to the general satisfaction of the Congregation; and they, looking upon him as a very proper person to be both Helper and Successor to Mr. Cooper: Therefore the Council did, and hereby do, *unanimously* elect and choose the said Mr. Charles Nisbet to be Helper or Assistant to the said Mr. John Cooper, as Minister

aforesaid; and also they, for the reasons and causes mentioned in their Act of Council, dated the 14th day of January, A. D. 1761, do hereby entitle the said Mr. Charles Nisbet, as long as he shall exercise the aforesaid office of Assistant to Mr. Cooper, a salary of fifty pounds sterling yearly (being the same which was settled on the two former Assistants), to be paid to him at two terms in the year, Whitsunday and Martinmass, by equal portions, and to commence upon the first Sabbath that he shall hereafter perform divine service in the Church of this Burgh. And further, the Council do hereby promise and engage that they will, without loss of time, cause to be made application to his majesty, as patron of the first Minister's charge here, for his royal signed manual in Mr. Nisbet's favour, naming him both Assistant to Mr. Cooper during his life time, and also Successor to him in his office at his death: and that they will thereafter take the proper steps in order to get him ordained a Minister and settled Helper and Successor as aforesaid, according to the rules of the Church. And they appoint the Clerk to make out an extract of this their act, and Baillie Lauchlan Mouson to transmit the same to Mr. Nisbet, and to request him to come to this place as soon as possibly he can in order to take upon himself the aforesaid office of an Assistant, in regard his presence, is much wanted here, as the whole of the ministry lies heavy upon Mr. Aitken, the other Minister." "Extracted from the Records of Council."

"William Speed, *Clerk*."

The Presentation, by the Royal Patron, was in the

following words. It will be perceived that it bears date near eleven months after the call of the Town Council. This is probably to be accounted for in two ways. *First*, the presentation by the Royal Patron was not necessary to the choice and settlement of an *Assistant* to the Pastor; but it *was* necessary to prepare the way for that Assistant to be "Successor in the Pastoral charge." *Secondly*, the Town Council probably had assurance that the Royal presentation would be made in due time, and on this assurance both they and the gentleman called, reposed with confidence, and proceeded at once to take those steps which were desirable for obtaining aid to their aged Pastor as speedily and effectually as possible. Some formalities at the seat of government led, no doubt, to delay in actually drawing up and transmitting the necessary document.

"*George R.*

"Whereas, by an humble representation to us, from Mr. John Cooper, Minister of the Gospel at Montrose, and from the present Magistrates of the said Borough, and remanent members of the Town Council thereof, we are informed, that, by the great age and infirmities of the said John Cooper, and other circumstances of the said Parish, it appeared necessary to the advancement of the Gospel, and the good of the said Parish, that Mr. Charles Nisbet, Preacher of the Gospel, should be ordained Assistant to the said John Cooper, during his life, and Successor in office, as Minister of the said Parish, after his death, provided our consent was obtained thereto, the presentation upon the death of the said John Cooper

being in our gift, and at our disposal: Therefore we are graciously pleased, from a due regard to the said representation, and the advancement of the Gospel in said Parish of Montrose, to give the Royal Assent to the said settlement, and to will and consent that, upon the death of the said John Cooper, the said Charles Nisbet be entitled to the stipend, benefice, and profits now belonging to the said John Cooper, in the same manner as if he had been presented upon the vacancy of the said Parish. Given at our Court at St. James's, the 25th day of November, 1763, in the fourth year of our reign."

"*By his Majesty's Command,*

"*Sandwich.*"

Mr. Nisbet, as before stated, considered it as his duty to accept this call, and soon after removed from the vicinity of Glasgow to Montrose. He was regularly ordained to the work of the Gospel Ministry, on the 17th of May, A. D. 1764, by the Presbytery of Brechin, within the bounds of which he was now placed. The Church to which he now undertook to minister was unusually large. The tradition is, that in the administration of the Lord's Supper, which, in the Church of Scotland, is dispensed at tables, and not pews, there were usually fourteen or fifteen tables. Such a charge, when the duties which, in the former and better days of the Church, it was considered as imposing, such as visiting, catechising, &c., as well as preaching, are taken into consideration, must have been a formidable undertaking for a young man. He addressed himself to it, however, with something of the spirit which its nature de-

manded, and was favoured with great acceptance by the people. Though he was officially a Helper or Assistant in the charge, yet the chief weight of all the duties connected with it devolved on him, as Mr. Cooper, the senior Minister, was aged and infirm, and seldom able to appear in public. He lived, however, nearly ten years after Mr. Nisbet was brought into connection with him, viz. until 1773, when he deceased, and left his young Assistant in the sole charge of the congregation.

About two years after Mr. Nisbet settled at Montrose, he was united in marriage with Miss Anne Tweedie, a daughter of Thomas Tweedie, Esquire, of Quarter, about thirty miles south of Edinburgh. His elder brother, Mr. Andrew Nisbet, before spoken of, afterwards minister of a Church in the neighbourhood of Glasgow, was, for several years prior to his ordination, engaged as a private Tutor in the family of Mr. Tweedie. During this period, the subject of this memoir, while a student in the University, and about eighteen years of age, paid a visit to his brother. In the course of this visit he became attached to Mr. Tweedie's daughter Anne. This attachment was favourably received, and ultimately led to a matrimonial engagement. Their marriage, however, on account of his situation, was postponed for twelve years. In the month of June, 1766, they were united, and lived together about thirty-eight years, in great harmony and comfort. About the same time with the marriage of Mr. Nisbet, the nuptials of another distinguished individual occurred at Montrose, both of whom were particular friends of Dr. Beattie, the celebrated moral philosopher and poet

of Marischal College, Aberdeen. On this occasion, Dr. Beattie composed and transmitted a beautiful Poem, which he styled EPITHALAMIUM MONTROSIANUM. Pains have been taken to recover this elegant testimonial of friendship from so popular and honoured a pen, but without success.

Not long after Mr. Nisbet became an assistant Minister at Montrose, another event occurred which showed the high esteem and confidence in which he was held by those who were most competent to judge of his character and attainments. In the month of November, 1766, on the death of the Rev. Dr. Finley, President of the College of New Jersey, the Rev. Dr. Witherspoon, then Pastor of the Church of Paisley, in the west of Scotland, was unanimously chosen to succeed him in the Presidentship of that Institution. His first answer to this call was in the negative. He felt himself so bound to the land and the Church of his nativity, that he could not consent to sever himself from them, and go to a land of strangers. While in this state of mind, feeling it impossible that he himself should accept the office, he addressed the following letter to Mr. Nisbet.

"*Paisley, May* 25, 1767."

"Dear Sir,"

"I received a letter from you, some time ago, upon the subject of the call from New-Jersey, which I did not answer immediately, as that affair was under deliberation. It has indeed given me the greatest uneasiness that ever any thing of the kind did, for I felt a very strong inclination in myself to comply; but met with so many difficulties from my

family and connexions, particularly my wife's insuperable aversion, that I have been at last obliged to give it up. I find the gentlemen here are still desirous of having one from Scotland, and particularly a young gentleman, Mr. Rush, from that country, a Student of Medicine at Edinburgh, a most agreeable young man, and who has the warmest attachment to the interest of that Seminary, was with me the end of last week on that subject. I then named *you* to him as the person of all my acquaintance the fittest for that office, and said that your being so much younger than me was, in my opinion, an advantage, instead of a loss. He told me you had been mentioned by his friends at Edinburgh; and that he was sure that any person recommended by me to them would be chosen by the Trustees. I, therefore, undertook to write to you on the subject, which I now beg you may take into your immediate serious consideration. I dare say you will consider this as a mark of my undissembled esteem, and assure you that you have not a sincerer friend; and that I believe it to be a station in which you may be eminently useful, as well as a station of much honour and profit. I know there is one difficulty: a prudent man may be backward to give his consent, when there is only a possibility, not a certainty, of his being elected; but when you consider the necessity of the case, and the disappointment they have already incurred, you will be sensible that we cannot write to them to make an election of another in Britain, unless they have reason to think it will be successful; and therefore hope you will overcome this difficulty; and that you may not run the least risque, I

have taken Mr. Rush, and engaged that no person shall know of this application to you but your friends at Edinburgh, Mr. Erskine and Mr. Wallace. Let me have your answer as soon as you possibly can on such a subject."

"I rejoice to hear of Mrs. Nisbet's welfare and fruitfulness; and do heartily wish you much pleasure and comfort in your family. Present my compliments to her in the most affectionate manner.

"I am, dear sir,

"Your affectionate brother,"

"JOHN WITHERSPOON."

When we consider that Mr. Nisbet was now only thirty-one years of age; that the gentleman who spoke thus of him was Doctor Witherspoon, undoubtedly one of the most sagacious and wise men of his day; and that such a judge, who had long and intimately known him, pronounced him "the fittest man of all his acquaintance" to be the head of a College; we are presented with a testimonial of Mr. Nisbet's reputation in Scotland, at this time, for talents and learning, of the most remarkable kind.

Whether, in consequence of this recommendation by Doctor Witherspoon, any movement was ever made in the Board of Trustees of Princeton College towards the election of Mr. Nisbet, is not now known. There is no record to that amount in the minutes of that Body. But the fact is, that in a very short time after this letter announcing his own refusal of the call to America, and recommending Mr. Nisbet, was written, Dr. Witherspoon reconsidered the subject; and intimated to the Trustees of the College that, if

their call should be repeated, he would accept of it. It was unanimously repeated. He declared his acceptance of it; and the next year removed to America, and entered on the duties of a station which he adorned for twenty-six years.

The truth is, Mr. Nisbet was now regarded as among the most learned men in Scotland, and was proverbially called "*the walking Library.*" Nor was this wonderful. His thirst for knowledge was insatiable. His habits of study were singularly diligent. His memory was not only excellent, but bordered on the prodigious. The Libraries within his reach were large and rich. And his access to the society of literary men, both in and out of the Church, was such as seldom falls to the lot of one so youthful, and who could boast so little of what is called worldly patronage.

The secret of the last mentioned circumstance was this. His social talents were singularly excellent. His wit and humour might be said to be unrivalled. He was really qualified to instruct and highly to entertain any circle, literary or religious, of the most elevated class. The consequence was, that his company was as much courted, and his social connexions as large and honourable, as almost any man of his day in the Church of Scotland. Circumstances, in his early history, made him intimately acquainted with several of the nobility of Scotland, both male and female; and his peculiarly interesting social character, served to rivet and extend friendships of this kind, and led to much intercourse with them while he remained in his native country, and to a gratifying correspondence after he came to America.

CHAPTER II.

His Ministry in Scotland.

When Mr. Nisbet entered on the Ministry in the Church of Scotland, that Church, as is well known, was divided, and had long been divided, into two great parties — the *Orthodox* and the *Moderate*. The *Orthodox* were distinguished by their attachment to evangelical truth, and faithful preaching; and by their opposition to Patronage, especially to its abuses. And although they were not enemies to the ecclesiastical establishment; yet they were jealous of the encroachments of the civil government, and ever on the watch to maintain the spiritual purity of the Church, and to guard its ministers and judicatories from being made the instruments of designing statesmen to accomplish schemes of secular policy, at the expense of real religion. The *Moderate* were more lax in their doctrinal views; less evangelical in their preaching; friends of the system of patronage; and more accommodating in their feelings and votes to the plans of secular politicians. The *Orthodox* were disposed to contend for the rights of the people in the settlement of ministers, and in all their judicial proceedings. The *Moderate* were, in general, favourable to the influence of the crown in the courts of the Church; willing

to let the law of patronage take its legal course, however hardly it might bear on the popular choice; and always reluctant to thwart the views of the civil administration.

Mr. Nisbet, from the first, associated himself decisively and uniformly with the *Orthodox* party. He contended, side by side, with his early and faithful friend, Dr. Witherspoon; and, although the class to which he belonged were, at that time, and continued for many years to be a minority; yet he adhered to his principles with steadfastness, and the laudable efforts of himself and his faithful associates were sometimes crowned with unexpected success. His piety, his learning, his wit, his powerful appeals, not unfrequently prevailed over all the talents, the plausibility, the tactics, and the governmental favour of his opponents.

Of Mr. Nisbet's talents as a debator in the General Assembly, the traditionary statements are of the strongest kind. At this distance of time, however, two specimens only can be given. For the space which these specimens occupy, no apology will be deemed necessary by those who are capable of appreciating genuine eloquence. It would be unjust to his memory to deny them a place in this Memoir. They are both extracted from the volume of the "London Magazine," for 1773, where they are accompanied with expressions of approbation of the highest kind.

By the constitution of Scotland, it is granted to the civil and ecclesiastical powers, jointly, to regulate the extent and number of parishes, by making such alterations as shall be judged to conduce to the general good; forming two parishes out of one large

one, or annexing one parish to another, and, consequently, sinking one altogether. On a case of a proposed annexation of one parish to another, and, of course, diminishing the number of parishes, which the Presbytery of Brechin, to which Mr. Nisbet belonged, had ordered, and which the synod of Perth and Stirling had affirmed; upon being brought before the General Assembly, in the year 1771, Mr. Nisbet, who had stood alone in the Presbytery, and also in the Synod, in opposition to the proposed measure, delivered the following speech:

"*Moderator*,"

"I bring this complaint, not for any private profit or emolument, but solely for the interest of the Church of Scotland, the very being of which I apprehend to be concerned in the issue of it. It may seem to need some apology, that I have adventured to differ from a whole presbytery and synod of my reverend fathers and brethren; but this will seem the less presumption, when it is considered, that only two members of presbytery, and five of the synod, have had an opportunity of judging in the matter, and even these were solicited and bespoke by the professed enemies of this church. In a case overloaded with truth and evidence, one must be under an unusual difficulty to adduce arguments. Dr. Tillotson complains that it is extremely hard that a man should be obliged to write a book to prove that an egg is not an oyster, or that a musket ball is not a pike. I find myself precisely in the same situation at present. I am to prove, I hope to your conviction, that it is for the interest of religion, that parish

churches should be preserved, instead of being destroyed, and do not imagine that I stand in need of any extraordinary eloquence or logic for that purpose. I must however beg the attention of the house to the cause, as however trifling it may appear to some, it is no less than *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*. How any member of this church should be overpersuaded into a scheme tending to its destruction, as it must appear a paradox, I reckon myself obliged to account for it. One thing only I beg leave to add, by way of preamble, before I enter on the narrative, namely, to purge myself of malice and partial counsel. As I am to narrate the actions of sundry gentlemen interested in this business, I begin with declaring, in the presence of that Being who knows my heart, that I have no personal enmity to any of them, that from some of them I have received good offices, and would be ready to serve all of them in an honest way.

The rise of this proposal of annexation, to the best of my knowledge, is as follows. Some time ago Mr. Bruce, one of the ministers of Brechin, applied to his presbytery for their concurrence in a process he intended to raise against his heretors for the augmentation of his stipend, which was readily granted ; but afterwards, being apprehensive of the length and expence of such a process, he resolved to try, with the consent of his presbytery, what he could get from them in the way of private negociation. A meeting was accordingly appointed for this purpose, betwixt the heretors and a committee of presbytery. At this meeting the heretors consented to make some addition to Mr. Bruce's stipend ; but it seems they in-

tended it should not be at their own charges. One parish was proposed to be annexed, to make some small addition to the living of another. The parish of Kinnaird, in the neighborhood of Brechin, was pitched upon for that purpose, and a scheme was set on foot by the tutors of Sir David Carnegy of Southesk, a minor, sole heretor of the parish of Kinnaird, in conjunction with sundry gentlemen, heretors of the parish of Brechin, to bring a process before the lords commissioners for plantation of kirks, &c. for suppressing the church and parish of Kinnaird, and annexing it to the adjacent parishes of Farnwell and Brechin, and to apply to the presbytery for their consent to said process. But as it could not be supposed that the presbytery would give their consent to a plan tending to the destruction of all their churches, they were not left to their liberty in judging. The gentlemen interested in the cause, by themselves or their agents, had first bespoken and engaged most of the members to support, or at least not to oppose this design ; and not till these solicitations were over, a presbytery *pro re nata* was called, in the middle of harvest, when few members could attend, and a petition from the heretors of the parishes of Kinnaird, Farnwell and Brechin, was presented to them, setting forth, that whereas many parishes in Scotland are incommodiously large, and others very small, the support of churches and manses was thereby rendered heavy upon heretors ; and whereas the parish of Kinnaird is a small one, consisting of not much more than one hundred examinable persons, and lying within one mile of the church of Farnwell, and not much farther from Brechin, therefore

praying that the presbytery would consent to a more commodious division of said parish, by annexing the parish of Kinnaird to the adjacent parishes of Farnwell and Brechin, and that they the heretors would engage to enlarge the church at Farnwell, so far as should be necessary for the accommodation of the new parishioners. This petition, after a delay of a fortnight, hardly obtained, was at last granted in a meeting of five members of the presbytery, three of whom were interested in the question.

On this occasion I thought it my duty, after pleading in vain what occurred to me in opposition to this destructive scheme, and having consulted with some of the most learned of my brethren, to dissent from this sentence of presbytery, and to complain of it to the ensuing synod. At the meeting of the synod in October following, out of seventy-two members, of whom the synod consists, only five attended, besides the presbytery of Brechin, who were parties; and these, with a correspondent from the synod of Perth and Stirling, whom they put into the chair at hearing the complaint, were pleased to dismiss it as frivolous, and it was even proposed to censure the complainer. Finding the interest of the church so scandalously neglected by the synod on this occasion, by means of the influence of heretors, I found myself under a necessity of bringing my complaint before this house, where I am persuaded that local prejudices and party influence will have no place. I am to show that the proposed annexation, agreed to by the presbytery and synod, is illegal, unnecessary, and ruinous to the interest of this church, and that it has been contrived by our professed enemies, to make a

precedent for destroying this church piece meal. It is indeed represented by the gentlemen petitioners to the presbytery as a more commodious division of the parishes in question, and what they propose by way of remedy to their present inconvenient division, is not that part of the greater parish should be annexed to the lesser, to bring them nearer to an equality, but that the least of them should be wholly suppressed, and annexed to the two others. This is commodious indeed : but to whom ? to the landed gentlemen only, who think they will have less stipend to pay, and fewer churches to support in consequence of it. They observe that some parishes are too large, and others too small. Granted ; but the common remedy they propose for both these inconveniences is annexation. Wonderfully commodious again ! I once knew a gentleman, who used to say, that there were only two kinds of dogs that he could not bear, the great dogs and the little dogs : the gentlemen petitioners seem to have the same idea of parishes, as they propose that the small parishes should be annexed to the great ones, to render them more commodious, and the fitter to be annexed in due time. Wonderful indeed ! *En cor Zenodoti, en jecur Cratetis !* Does this scheme fall any thing short of a design to destroy all the parish churches in Scotland one after another ? Non-jurant meetings were suppressed by law in 1746, though connived at by the present ministry for reasons of state. If an attempt had been made to suppress any of these, though against an express law, the promoters of this scheme would have cried out persecution, and applied to the throne for redress. But it seems it is lawful enough

to contrive the suppression of established churches, and to make use of the law, which was made for their preservation, for their destruction. As the lenity of the ministry has tolerated these non-jurant meetings, why should not the benefit of this toleration be extended to the established church ?

If such things go on, no one can say how far this idea of conveniency may be extended. Dionysius, a respectable heretor in ancient times, thought it extremely convenient for him to abstract the golden cloak from the statue of Jupiter, and to annex it to his own property ; and he gave very good reasons for it : it was too heavy in summer, and too cold in winter : and by the same train of thinking among our landed gentlemen, it may possibly soon be found most convenient to have no churches at all. Our legal establishment must be wholly elusory, if it is to be cut and carved upon by every gentleman at pleasure, according to his notions of ideal conveniency. Although it were not publicly known, that the pretender's friends are at the bottom of this design, the very nature of it proves it the work of an enemy to our church. The Jews reasoned well when they said, "He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue." And may we not say as justly, He hates our constitution, and has destroyed us a church ? It might seem wonderful indeed in one view, how the persons concerned in this design should ever have been united ; but a little time ago, on occasion of a controverted election, they were as bitter enemies to each other as ever Herod and Pontius Pilate. But when a church is to be destroyed, they become at once hearty friends ; and when it is considered that

a non-jurant meeting has been lately erected at Brechin by one of the subscribers, the cause of their union may be easily guessed.

"But to consider this proposal in the view of real conveniency; the parish of Brechin is six miles long, and near three broad, sufficiently inhabited, besides the large town of Brechin in the centre. The church is too small already for the people that attend it, and the expense of supporting the fabric is furnished out of the poor's money. Such a parish does not seem to stand in any need of an addition to make it more convenient. The parish of Farnwell is at present as large as many others in its neighbourhood, and the minister has a living superior to most in the country: so that neither does this parish need any addition. If real conveniency was sought for, the smallest degree of common sense would dictate, that the smaller parish should be augmented from the greater. But it seems this did not occur to the wise projectors of this scheme, or they did not think it so much for their interest. It is evident then, that no part of the parish of Kinnaird can be annexed to Brechin, as the church is already too small, and the heretors have no power to enlarge it. This being the case, how are the parishioners of Kinnaird to be accommodated when annexed to Brechin, unless they could contract themselves into as small dimensions as the audience of the Pandæmonium, or choose to go to the non-jurant meeting? Besides, the expense of opening the wall of that cathedral would amount to more than these heretors have bestowed on churches these fifty years past. Our Church, Sir, is established by law, and unless that establish-

ment be entirely elusory, it must extend to all and every one of our parish churches, except where the law has declared otherwise. It is true, that the lords commissioners have a power to annex churches; but this power is limited by law, and will be found not to extend to the case in hand. The act which defines their powers is act 3, part 22, Ja. VI. 18th June, 1617, and has these express words: 'With special power to the said commissioners, to unite sik kirks, ane or moe, as may conveniently be unite, where the fruits of any one alone will not suffice to entertain ane minister.' It is evident from these words, that small and insufficient livings only were in the view of the legislature, and that a sufficient living is incapable of annexation. The parish of Kinnaird is a sufficient living: there are twelve parishes in the presbytery, whose living is inferior to it, and but four greater. Unfavourable statutes ought to be strictly interpreted: what the law permits the lords to do in one case only, can in no shape be extended to any other case whatever. The power of the lords commissioners is for edification, and not for destruction: they are designed in the act, lords commissioners for plantation of kirks and valuation of tiends: now to destroy one church in three over all the kingdom, can never be called planting of kirks. They have power indeed to annex insufficient livings, as an act of mercy to ministers when no other provision can be got for them, but have no power to touch those that are already sufficient. This parish of Kinnaird is a sufficient living, and it is not the least in Scotland, nor of the presbytery where it lies; and as the estate of Southesk, of which it is a part, has been under for-

feiture since 1715, it is no wonder that it is not very populous at present, though, when the improvements already projected shall be carried into execution, it will probably be as populous as many others. But the promoters of this scheme have chosen to catch the time for it while this objection is in force, by a policy similar to that of valuing their tiends before their rents are raised. But does not the establishment of all churches tolerate small parishes as well as large ones? Small and great are relative terms, and, though this design should succeed, some parishes will be smaller than others till we come to the greatest of all, by destroying them one by one, *Demo unum, demo etiam unum, dum cadat elusus ratione ruentis acervi:* so that the utmost favour that any parish in Scotland could expect from this annexing scheme is only the same that Polyphemus promised to Ulysses, to be devoured last of all. Ministers of small parishes may be useful to the church by the works of their retirement. Some of the ministers of our church have begun to figure in historical composition; and unless we tolerate small charges, how shall our ministers find time to write histories? Every sufficient living is, by the plain meaning of this act, continued upon the establishment, and it is out of the power of the lords commissioners to touch it; but if this line is once broken, and one sufficient living suppressed, our whole establishment becomes a baseless fabric, and may be undermined at pleasure. Why should this little church be denied the benefit of all other churches? Is it not robbery, is it not assassination, to disjoin it from the common foundation of the rest, to destroy

it with more ease? This is like taking a man into a dark corner, and knocking him down before he can call for help. But the words of the statute are express to this purpose, so that we need not rest on general inferences; for it afterwards expressly 'finds and declares, that all kirks which are planted with ministers, whose stipends extend to five chalders victual, or five hundred merks money, [the then *minimum* of that country] are expressly excepted out of this commission, and no wayes comes under the compasse thereof, neither shall the said commissioners have any power, by virtue hereof, to meddle with any kirks or stipends which are in that case, seeing the said commission is not extended to the same.' No words can be conceived more positive or express for hindering the annexation of sufficient livings; nay, the legislature seem anxious to declare this to be their meaning. What then must we think of the logic or candour of those who would subject them to it at pleasure? Dr. Donne tells us of an ingenious critic, who, in explaining the Decalogue, expunged the negative particle from every precept, and would have the twelve negatives taken from it, to be inserted in the several articles of the Apostle's Creed, to make a complete and consistent body of doctrine. And surely it must need no less licentious interpretation to evince, that a sufficient church living can be annexed, since the law is so express to the contrary. Some may alledge, that the lords have a discretionary power to annex what churches they think fit, but the law gives them no such power; and however fit the present lords may be to have such a power, I dare not trust their successors. The law requi-

res two things to make a parish legally annexable: insufficiency of living, and commodiousness for annexation. Neither of these have place in the present case. Besides, this church of Kinnaird is rather better founded than most others, not being a popish foundation, but erected by the lords, upon mature deliberation, and conviction of its necessity, in 1661, an age of no very violent zeal for religion, when building of churches was far from being the the ruling passion. And the same lords were so convinced of the necessity and importance of this erection, that in 1718 they granted an augmentation of stipend to the minister. I know there is a story told, which seems contrived on purpose to favour this annexation: it is said, that about 1661 there was an *immortale odium & nunquam sanabile vulnus* betwixt the earl of Southesk and the earl of Airlie then residing in the neighbourhood, because the parson of Farnwell, where they both attended divine worship, used to bow to Lord Airlie before his lordship, and that this parish of Kinnaird was disjoined from that of Farnwell and Brechin, only that his lordship might have the inexpressible satisfaction of receiving the first bow from the parson—a favour not so much esteemed in our days. This absurd story has been evidently contrived to represent the erection of this parish to have proceeded from a whim, that it might be destroyed by another whim.

"The gentlemen concerned in this design would perhaps laugh at the mention of sacrilege, so that I shall not insist upon that; but must it not at least be felony to attempt the destruction of a church already as well secured as the law can secure it, and to ab-

stract the revenues of it from the lawful proprietors? These gentlemen would have been hanged by the neck, if they had formed the same design against a private house; and why it should be more lawful to assault a church is hard to say. I have heard of a couple of Highland gentlemen, long ago, who having some difference about the division of the spoil they had taken in conjunction during the Michaelmas moon, gravely resolved to have it decided by the court of session. The present case, in my view of it, not a little resembles theirs. To demand the consent of the judges to an unlawful design is an insult upon all law whatever. It signifies nothing to say, that the stipend, when annexed, is to be divided amongst the neighbouring clergy. God hates robbery for burnt offering, and so should all his servants. If a robber takes my money on the road, whether he keeps it to himself, or gives it to his whore, I am equally injured, and the law is equally transgressed in both cases. If the ministers of large parishes are to be allowed to annihilate the lesser livings, and to divide them among themselves, must not this tend to corrupt the clergy, by offering baits to their avarice, and making them have an evil eye towards their brethren? not to say, that this would be an erecting of dignities in the church, and introducing episcopacy in masquerade. I have seen a print representing a parson grasping at all the churches in his view; but were I possessed of the genius of a Raphael or a Michel Angelo, I would draw the figure of an annexing heretor scowling at all the churches around him, and threatening their destruction. If ministers, whose livings are already almost double those of many of

their brethren, are allowed to hope for further increase of them by the destruction of their neighbours, we may soon expect to hear of annexations projected by ministers, and some are already talked of in this neighbourhood. We have had already four annexations in this presbytery since the Reformation, and we have now as many non-jurant meetings. Some of these annexations have been attended with great inconveniences. By one of them, in the hill country, the parish is rendered more than seven Scots miles in length; so that some people do not attend the church from their baptism till their marriage. By another of them the minister is obliged to ride three miles in bad road every second Sabbath. Such are the blessed fruits of annexation; but we complain not of what has been done according to law. The assembly ought to be more suspicious of this project of annexation, as this is a disaffected country, where there are too many that would wish to see all our churches suppressed, and this annexation must soon be followed by many others. If the law does not secure every sufficient living from annexation, our establishment can stand only till the necessary processes for its ruin are completed.

"I must likewise beg leave to call the attention of the house to this cause, on account of the too great passiveness of ministers and inferior judicatures in matters of annexation. Of this the assembly was formerly so sensible, that by act 5, ass. 1740, sess. 9, they expressly 'discharged all presbyteries to consent to, or connive at the annexation or suppressing of parishes, without the consent or approbation of the synod of the bounds, or the general assembly."

The present cause evinces, that it is possible for heretors to persuade a presbytery, and even a synod, that the suppression of a parish church is for the good of the community, because it may promote the temporal interest of some individuals, and give hopes of like gain to others. Amazing indeed must have been the eloquence of Mr. Habakkuk Slyboots, who could persuade a man to hang himself in cold blood. The present cause exhibits no less a prodigy—churchmen convinced that the destruction of parishes is for the good of the national church. Such is the wonderful influence of heretors! When inferior judicatories are become thus weak and slavish, and in the interest of our adversaries, it must become the wisdom of this house to put a stop to these proceedings, by reversing the acts of the presbytery and synod complained of, and opposing the projected annexation, and all such illegal attempts against our establishment.

"Thus, Sir, I have stated to the assembly this cause, which is properly the cause of the whole church. Self-preservation should teach us to defend ourselves as long as we can. *Est enim hæc non scripta, sed nata lex, quam non didicimus, accepimus, legimus, fed ex ipsa natura arripuimus, hausimus, expressimus*. I hope the house will see, that the present project is only a branch of a design against the whole church, and demands your strictest attention. What is now the case of this small parish, may soon be that of many others. *Nam tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet.* It is true to a proverb, *multis minatur, uni qui injuriam facit.* No reason can be pleaded for the suppression

of this parish, which does not militate with equal force against a hundred others. It is not wonderful, that the enemies of our happy establishment should be zealous and active in promoting non-jurant meetings; but to suppress established churches to make room for them is rather too much. Some may be averse to believe, that our church should be in danger from attempts of this sort; but if present instances are less clear, the records of past times will prove beyond doubt, that the like practices have been formerly used by the enemies of the church. We find in the records of the *Concilium Byzacenum*, that annexation was one of the methods employed, during the Arian persecution, for the destruction and extirpation of the Catholics; and in latter times, before the formal revocation of the edict of Nantes, the churches of the Protestants were taken from them in sundry places, on the pretence of their being unnecessary. The policy of our enemies, and their present situation by our laws, does not permit them at once to show the cloven foot, or tell us that they design our destruction; but if we are not extremely blind, we may easily discern the drift of their designs, Their interest is to proceed by silent sap and machination, and especially to make use of some of us to ruin the rest. Much, alas! has been done this way already through their influence, by driving away the people from the churches; and because that method does not succeed fast enough for their wishes, it seems that what remains of our ruin is to be accomplished by taking away the churches from the people. The design in hand is visibly contrived for your destruction, by annihilating your parishes one

by one. What a dismal prospect for this church! *Quid facerent hostes capta crudelius urbe?* By an invasion of foreign enemies our possessions might be ruined, and our churches burnt; but shall we stand by and see the same thing done by our countrymen in time of peace, and under colour of law? Shall our venerable and ancient constitution, which has resisted so long the attempts of persecutors, and stood the shock of two rebellions, be gradually subverted by the covert machinations of the church and state? Shall we be reduced to take up the poet's lamentation,

> ——" *Captiq ; dolis lacrymisq ; coacti,*
> *Quos non Tydides, nec Larissæus Achilles,*
> *Non anni domuere decem, non mille carinæ.*"

" It is not to be wondered at, that some of the real friends of our establishment are found among the promoters of this annexation, as it is common to see such overreached and blindfolded by their adversaries. Few have ever been betrayed except by their friends. I have done my duty in warning you of your danger; I have shown you the Pretender's soldiers actually at work upon your church, with the axes and hammers of annexation and demembration. It remains that you do your duty by defending it to the utmost. If you can stand tamely by, while your enemies are so busy, you will fall despised and unpitied, as your ruin will be of yourselves. Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands! If the assembly give their consent to this annexation, the consequence must be the instant ruin of many parishes;

but if they vigorously support the interest of the church by opposing it, and reversing the sentences of the Presbytery and Synod, I have reason to believe that the principal party interested in this cause is so worthy a person, and so much a friend to this church, that, in respect to the authority of this house, he will desist from the attempt, and the little understrappers of Jacobite polities will be hindered from accomplishing their wicked designs.

"But if, after all, this annexation shall be carried into execution, with or without the consent of the Assembly, I find myself unable to express my apprehensions for our whole establishment, and therefore shall conclude in the words of a celebrated author,* who is an ornament to the present age:

"'No oppression is so heavy or lasting as that which is inflicted by the perversion and exorbitance of legal authority: the robber may be seized, and the invader repelled whenever they are found; they who pretend no right but that of force may by force be punished or suppressed: but when plunder bears the name of impost, and murder is perpetrated by a judicial sentence, Fortitude is intimidated, and Wisdom confounded; Resistance shrinks from an alliance with Rebellion, and the villain remains secure in the robes of the magistrate.'"

The Editor of the London Magazine, after giving this speech at length, adds: "Though Principal *Robertson*, and several more of the court luminaries, spoke warmly in favour of the annexation, the General Assembly, by a great majority, reversed the

* "Rambler, No. 145, vol. iii. p. 227."

sentence of which Mr. Nisbet complained, and, for once, the force of eloquence was visibly exemplified."

The scond specimen of Mr. Nisbet's eloquence in the General Assembly, is found in a speech which he delivered in that Body, in 1772. This speech was occasioned by an appeal from the Synod of *Angus* and *Mearns*, which had affirmed a sentence of the Presbytery of *Fordun*, settling, or inducting Mr. *John Brymer*, as Minister of *Marykirk*. The original charge was, that the presentation of Mr. Brymer to the parish, was effected by an act of *Simony*. This charge was set aside, and the settlement ordered to proceed, by the Presbytery, and afterwards by the Synod. The whole subject was brought by appeal before the General Assembly. On the trial of this appeal, Mr. Nisbet, on behalf of the appellants, made the following Speech:

"*Moderator*,"

"I appear not at your bar as a party, but as a member of an inferior court, warranted by the constitution of this church to complain of a decision of my superiors. The right of dissent and complaint is competent to every member of this church, and I hope that my using it in the present case will not deprive me of the character of a peaceable member. It gives me pleasure to reflect, that in this complaint I am not alone, but that many worthy ministers voted as I did, and the most worthy and respectable member of our Synod joined my dissent.

"The sentence I am to complain of is, in my opinion, and I hope to make it appear to this house, contrary to the word of God, to common sense, and

the express laws of this church. This cause has been urged into an early diet of this assembly, on account of its relating to the moral character of a minister. In my opinion, it is of infinitely greater importance than the character of any individual. On the decision which you must give in this cause, the moral character of this church and its assemblies immediately depends; and it must be evident, by your conduct this day, whether piety, learning, and prudence shall be the necessary requisites in the clerical character, or merely the possession of a little money. To give the house a full view of this cause, I shall first give a brief narrative of the whole procedure, taking notice of sundry irregularities committed in the course of it, and lastly set forth the proofs of simony against this presentee, which ought to set aside his settlement, had it been ever so regularly and formally conducted.

"To begin with the narrative. It is well known that sundry years ago, the King's college of Aberdeen exposed to public sale, by way of auction, in consequence of an advertisement in the public papers, the patronage of sixteen churches then in their gift, of which that of this parish of Marykirk was one. At said auction, one Brymer, an innkeeper at Marnock-kirk, in Banffshire, father to the now presentee, became purchaser of the patronage of Marykirk, having previously paid a visit to the incumbent, to enable him to judge what price he might venture to give for it. As it was known at the time of the sale that this Brymer had a son, the now presentee, then prosecuting the study of divinity, no one needed to be told that this purchase was intended for his benefit,

and in this view it appeared new and strange to all that heard of it; and it is well known that the said patron, on viewing the strength and healthy look of the incumbent, declared that he might probably live almost as long as his son, and that instead of 300*l.* which the college had asked, he would venture no more than 200*l.*

"On the death of Mr. Thomson, minister of Marykirk, Brymer, now patron by the articles of the roup, issues his presentation to his son, the now presentee, concealing however his relation to himself. When this presentation came into the country, the parishioners of Marykirk, astonished to see themselves bought and sold, as to their spiritual interests, by those whose duty it was to have protected them, were alarmed for their safety; but expected that the laws of this church would prevent such a scandalous bargain from being carried into execution. With this view, some of the elders, the now appellants, attended the meeting of the presbytery of Fordoun, when it was expected that this new presentation would make its appearance. But the members, being already gained by the patron's friends, gave them no opportunity of objecting against it. The presentation was given in, read, and sustained in a whisper—a practice that seems borrowed from the privy council of the kings of Brentford.

"A meeting of presbytery was appointed for the moderation of a call, at which the heretors (though only one of them is of the communion of this church) appeared, and gave their consent to the settlement of the presentee, having used all endeavours, by threats, promises, &c. to prevail on their tenants and

dependants to sign the call. The parishioners had employed a notary to appear for them, and to propose objections against the settlement; but as in this slavish country no notary of character could be got to appear against gentlemen of property, for fear of their resentment, the parishioners were obliged to employ one given to drinking, who, being plied by the heretors' agents, was soon rendered incapable of conducting their business properly. However, he got access to the presbytery, gave in his letters of proxy, and objected against sustaining the call, on account of its being signed only by the heretors, and a few of the lowest of the people; and on the presbytery's sustaining it, he appealed to the ensuing synod, and gave in his reasons: but the presbytery having adjourned to a blind ale-house along with the heretors, refused to take in his reasons, or give an extract of their sentence, and appointed a day for the admission of the presentee, notwithstanding the appeal, which it seemed they intended to smother. They dismissed without prayer.

"At the meeting of the presbytery for the admission of the presentee, the parishioners procured an agent from a distance, who gave in objections against the presentee in form of a libel, and referred himself to the presentee's oath for proof of his assertions. His objections were overruled, his libel refused to be admitted to proof: on which he appealed to the ensuing synod, and the presentee was admitted in the face of the appeal, and amidst the tears and groans of the congregation. One of the parishioners objecting to the presentee's doctrine, and endeavouring to support his objections from the scriptures, one of the

heretors, standing in a gallery above, aimed a push at him with a pike-staff, which drove his Bible out of his hand, and pierced through the whole of the Acts of the Apostles; which obliged the poor man to drop his argument, and to escape for his life.

"The parishioners, however, rested on their appeal to the synod, notwithstanding every method was used to intimidate and distress them, especially by a committee of the presbytery, who procured an order from the sheriff of the county to the kirk treasurer, to deliver up the poor's box to the presentee without receipt, under the pain of instant imprisonment; which order, however, upon proper representations, was at last recalled.

"Before the meeting of synod, commissions of array were issued by the heretors, and sent by the presentee to many members of the synod, summoning them, under the pain of their high displeasure, to attend that court, and support the presentee, which is the common way of conducting synod business in this country. At this meeting of synod, though packed and summoned by the influence of the heretors, the presbytery's sentence was affirmed by a majority of a few votes only, and the cause now waits the decision of this court.

"To enumerate all the irregularities committed in the dependance of this cause before the presbytery would be an endless task. The very orders of the presentee were irregular. He had been ordained some time before by the presbytery of Strathbogie, *ad ministerium vagum*, without any parochial charge, to avoid the examination of the presbytery of Fordoun as to his ministerial talents; and of this,

that presbytery was so sensible, that they brought an overture to next synod for preventing the like practice in time coming. To ordain a clergyman without a title or charge is contrary to the laws of all churches; and if this were permitted, it were easy to prove that one presbytery, assisted by patrons, and brokers in patronages, might furnish ministers to all this church, of whatever characters they pleased. The laws of our church appoint ministers to be ordained by that presbytery, within which they are to have a parochial charge, unless they have formerly been ordained by another where they had the like concern. But our laws give no license to any presbytery to ordain ministers for exportation; in which case it might be justly suspected, that they would be the more careless as to their fitness for the office: and as this ordination of the presentee was procured after the purchase of the patronage, it appears to be a branch of the same design, and in the strongest manner to infer a simonial intention, unless it likewise was paid for, which might be the case for any thing I know. Another irregularity is the presbytery's proceeding to admit the presentee in the face of an appeal. To say nothing of the first appeal, which the presbytery affect to deny, and have kept out of their minutes, their proceeding in the face of the second appeal is in the highest degree irregular. I know that our forms allow inferior church courts to proceed *usque ad sententiam*, notwithstanding appeals; but to execute their sentence in the face of an appeal is such a stretch of lawless and arbitrary power, as, should it be once permitted, would render superior courts wholly useless. The

rights of appeal have been reckoned sacred among all nations, and have been religiously regarded even in the most arbitrary times. The great Apostle Paul, finding himself before a partial judge, appealed to the Roman emperor; but it was the apostle's great mercy that he never met with such judges as the presbytery of Fordoun, who, as it is evident from their conduct, would have laughed at his appeal. These gentlemen would have told him, 'No, sir, you have no right to appeal: we will kill you; we will execute our sentence, and then you may appeal to Cæsar when you please.' How low is this church sunk in point of character, when its judges want the probity of heathens, and the integrity of infidels!

"Another irregularity in this business is the want of a legal call, without which, according to our constitution, no relation can be established between a minister and a congregation. As to the call of heretors, who are not members of our church, I am ashamed to mention it, it being contrary to the most obvious dictates of common sense, that persons should be callers of a minister who are never to have any connexion with him, nor to attend his ministry. It has this additional circumstance of aggravation in it, that these heretors declared under their hands that they committed to the presentee the care of their souls, and promised him all due obedience in the Lord! I want words to express the absurdity and profanity of such a conduct, especially considering it as countenanced and allowed by a presbytery of this church; but I hope that the gentlemen concerned will be censured for it by their own bishops.

"Our people, sir, never intermeddle with elections

of Episcopal ministers, nor renounce the communion of this church, in order to have a share in them; and if these gentlemen had been possessed of that sense and breeding which our people have always had, they would have had no concern in these matters. Besides, sir, these gentlemen are totally ignorant of our laws, and imagine that heretors have the power of ordination: so it is to be wished, that they would confine themselves to the affairs of their elections, their draught horses or setting dogs, or some subject that lies level to their understandings. As to the few people of the communion of this church who have signed the call, they were obliged to it by threats and concussion, and some of them were literally beaten by their worthy masters. It was a matter of no importance to the heretors who was minister of Marykirk, as they were to have no concern with him, nor to attend his ministry; but it was of the utmost importance to the parishioners who are members of this church, and depend for edification and spiritual instruction on the ministration of their parish minister. I know there are some among us who pay great regard to the consent of the landed gentlemen, as such, in the settlement of parishes; because they suppose that the landed interest are the supporters of the church. I remember but one time when our church was in danger: I mean in the late rebellion; and what then became of our noble friends? They either joined the pretender, or took protection from him, or ran like frighted hares to the border, and happy was the man that could get first to London. Such are our boasted supporters! But as the ordination of a minister, being a spiritual transaction,

has no relation whatever to land, it is evident that the proprietors of land, as such, have no sort of interest in it. But whatever be in this argument, the parishioners joined issue in the main with the heretors: they have given their consent that the presentee should be established minister at Marykirk; that is, they have declared that he is a minister not fit for them to hear, and the parishioners are exactly of the same opinion.

"But to come to the grand objection against this settlement, to wit, simony: this, in my apprehension, is so plain, that it is but mere wrangling to attempt to deny it. Simony is defined by the canonists, *Studiosa cupiditas emendi aut vendendi spiritualia, aut spiritualibus annexa.* This crime may be committed in a variety of forms, and may have sundry objects. The canonists mention sacraments, orders, induction, and promotion; but the above definition comprises the essence of it. It is called *crimen mere ecclesiasticum*, and to the commission of it three parties are requisite, the seller, the buyer, and the accepter. As crimes love disguise, and as no one yet has been hardy enough to present himself to a benefice, it is natural to suppose that the simoniacal presentee will get some friend or relation to act the part of the ostensible patron, as in the present case; but it is to be observed, that in the canons against this crime, the vengeance of the sentence falls first upon the accepter, it being for his account that the bargain is made, as we commonly say, that if there were no receipts, there would be no thieves. This crime has always been considered as the greatest corruption, and forbidden under the

pain of deposition in all ages of the church. The first ages of Christianity knew not that operose distinction and precision, which have become necessary in latter ages for describing this crime. The story of Simon Magus, in the Acts of the Apostles, was the pattern from whence they borrowed their notion of it, and the name of it. The most ancient canons depose without distinction all such as are ordained or inducted by the influence of money, by whomsoever given or however artfully concealed. The canons that go by the name of the Apostles, though not quite so ancient, are plain to this purpose. I quote Father Caranza's translation of them. *Si quis episcopus, aut presbyter, aut diaconus per pecunias hanc obtinuerit dignitatem, dejiciatur ipse et ordinator ejus, et a communione modes omnibus abscindatur, ficut Simon Magus a Petro.* Again, in the second council of Orleans, can. 4, *Si quis sacerdotium per pecuniæ nundinum execrabile ambitione quæsierit, abjiciatur ut reprobus, quia apostolica sententia donum Dei esse præcipit pecuniæ trutina minime comparandum.* I quote these decrees of councils, and could quote many more to the same purpose, not as of authority in this church, but as the opinions of wise and disinterested men in the earliest times of the church, and they deserve great regard on that score. You see they condemn as simoniacal all settlements or ordination of ministers, wherof money is the procuring cause, by whomsoever given, and however the simoniacal intention may be covered; and it is a maxim among the canonists, authorised by common sense, that money given by any one person to ano-

ther, with the view of getting a person fixed in a pastoral charge, infers simony against the accepter of said charge, unless it can be proved that it was given maliciously, with an intent to procure his deposition.

"To bring home this doctrine to the present case, it is evident that money is the sole cause of Mr. Brymer's settlement. The sale of the patronage was public, and the parties known. The design of the father to provide for his son is necessarily inferred from his buying the patronage, his visit to Mr. Thomson before the purchase, and afterwards actually presenting his son to the benefice. Can the simoniacal intention be clearer in any supposable case than in the present one? It is not denied that Brymer the father bought the patronage; but it is said, that it does not appear that he intended it for his son, and consequently here is no simony. I could peril the whole cause upon this single point: if any gentleman of character will stand up and give his oath, that he believes in his conscience that the father had no intention of this sort, I here give up my argument; but I find this challenge will not be accepted. Intention is the soul of all crimes; but as it is not visible of itself, nor will be owned by the accused party, it must be inferred from overt acts: and in the present case a man has no need of being a conjuror to determine positively, that Brymer the patron purchased this benefice solely as a provision for his son, and for his emolument allenarly. It is not to be supposed, that a candidate will purchase a patronage openly by himself, in order to manifest his simoniacal intention, and facilitate his conviction; and there is no person so

bad, or so insignificant, as not to have a friend or relation to make the bargain for them, and fulfil their intention. Simony, like other crimes, will always affect to be under cover; but in the present case the cover is so thin and transparent, that none can be deceived by it, except those who have a mind to be deceived. A father, of the rank of an innkeeper, has a son following the study of divinity, and buys the patronage of a benefice. Can it be believed by any person of common sense, that he had no intention to present his son to it, or that his son knew nothing of the transaction? I can only say that every man, woman and child, in the country where I live, knew the contrary in the present case. A father must be concerned to provide for his own son: on account of his near relation to him he must be prejudiced in his favour, cannot be a judge of his qualifications. A patron exercises a judgment in the choice of his patentee, and there is in every presentation an explicit *delectus personæ* for his fitness real or supposed; but in the present case no judgment could be exercised, and no deliberation could have place, on account of the near relation betwixt the patron and presentee. As a father cannot be the judge of his own son, nor a witness for him, so by parity of reason he cannot be his patron. Nor is this a new notion. The tenth council of Toledo, in their third canon, expressly inhibits prelates, who were then the only patrons, from presenting their relations, or even their dependants, to any benefice in their gift. The canon is entitled, *Contra episcopos qui monasteriis vel ecclesiis consanguineos, vel sibi faventes præficiunt*, and runs thus: *Agnovimus enim quosdam pontifices præcepti*

principiis apostolorum (qui ait, Pascite qui in vobis est gregem, non coacte, sed spontanee, neque vi dominantes in clero, &c.) ita esse immemores, ut quibusdam monasteriis parochialibusque ecclesiis, aut suæ consanguinitatis personas, aut sui favoris participes, iniquum sæpe statuant in prælaturam, ita illis providentur commoda inhonesta, ut aut eisdem deserantur quæ proprio episcopo dari justus ordo depoposcerit, aut quæ rapere deputati exactoris violentia poterit. Proinde placuit nobis & in præsenti tale rescindere factum, & non esse de cætero faciendum. Nam quisque pontificium deinceps aut sanguine propinquis aut favore personis quibuscunque sibi conjunctis talia commendare lucra tentaverit, ad suum nefandæ præsumptionis excidium, et quod jussum fuerit, devocetur in irritum, & qui ordinavit, annuæ excommunicationi subjaceat. Further, in a synod assembled at London, anno 1171, can. 9. 'Let none transfer a church to another in the name of a portion, or take any money or covenanted gain for the presentation of any one. He that is guilty, by conviction or confession, is for ever deprived of the patronage of that church by the king's authority and ours.' I own that the practice of buying and selling benefices is tolerated in the neighbouring church of England, though no less contrary to the laws of that church than of this; and there every presentee is obliged to take a tremendous oath against simony, bearing that neither he himself, nor his friends, have purchased the benefice on his account. All good men in the church of England have lamented and abhorred this practice, as contrary to Christianity, and tending to

the utter corruption of the clerical order, and its fruits have been answerable to their apprehensions. But simony cannot be more expressly forbidden in any church than in ours. By three several acts of assembly in 1753, 1757, and 1759, it is declared to infer deposition in a minister, and forfeiture of license to a probationer, to bargain with the patron or his friends, either by themselves, or by their friends, with or without their knowledge, or to give or promise any reward whatever to the patron or his friends, in consideration of his settlement, or to fulfil any such bargain when made, or to conceal it when brought to his knowledge; and presbyteries are required to proceed to the sentence of deposition in all the cases above specified, or when any simoniacal paction or practice is used by any person whatever in consideration of a particular settlement. It is most childish reasoning to allege, as has been done on the other side, that because the buying of rights of patronage is not expressly mentioned in these acts, therefore such purchase cannot infer simony. These acts specify all the modes of simony that had fallen under the consideration of the assembly at that time; and as they comprehend and mention much lesser degrees of the crime of simony than that of buying the patronage of a benefice, can it be believed by any person in his senses, that such merchandize is not as much, and indeed more contrary to the spirit of these laws, than the buying of a presentation? If it is simony by our laws, as no one doubts, for a candidate to purchase from the patron one single *vice*, can it be less so to purchase the patronage absolutely, or that the candidate himself should become patron in the person

of his friend? Common sense revolts at the mention of so absurd a distinction. The assembly will be pleased to attend a moment to the consequence of such transactions. If they are permitted to go on, persons of the most infamous characters, destitute of every ministerial talent, if possessed only of a little money, and the favour of a single presbytery, may purchase any benefice in this kingdom. It is well known that a person who a few years ago appeared as a tumbler in several towns in Scotland, has purchased a benefice of considerable revenue in the west of England, and it may be expected that tumblers of inferior reputation will soon purchase into our church in the same manner. How venerable would this assembly appear to the public, if we had seen one half of its members with their heels upwards! We see already that there are patrons ready enough to sell their patronages to candidates or their friends, as often as they can make a penny by the bargain. The King's college of Aberdeen has set a noble example to the rest, so that we may soon find more instances of this kind. That learned body, fired by the noble love of wealth that animates most of our modern literati, have openly set to sale the sacred trust reposed in their ancestors. Money is the principal thing, therefore get money: this seems to have been their maxim. I shall not repeat what a learned gentleman has just now observed as to the stomachs of literary men; but to avoid offence, I shall read a short quotation from an eminent author, which I find accidentally among my notes. 'Such is the state of the world, that the most obsequious of the slaves of pride, the most rapturous of the gazers upon wealth, the

most officious of the whisperers of greatness, are collected from seminaries appropriated to the study of wisdom and virtue, where it was intended that appetite should learn to be content with little, [here indeed is something relating to their stomachs] and that hope should aspire only to honours which no human power can give or take away.' Rambler, No. 180.

"By the laws of our church, sir, a candidate for the ministry is obliged to undergo a long and laborious course of study, and to maintain a decent and irreproachable character. He must be certified by a professor of divinity, and examined carefully by a presbytery, before he obtains license to preach, and when presented to any particular charge, must undergo a new trial before that presbytery in whose bounds the charge lies, before he is ordained a minister; and at his ordination all persons are called upon to produce, if they can, any accusation against his life and doctrine. So anxious is our church for the purity of the clerical character, and their being possessed of proper talents for the ministry, that their whole settlement is made to turn upon that: But how different a course has been followed by this presentee; and if allowed, will be followed by other candidates! If this settlement is affirmed, persons without learning, piety, or moral character, need only get the favour of any particular presbytery, which will not be difficult to be found, and get themselves ordained *ad ministerium vagum;* and then, if they have but a little money, or can get credit for it till the benefice becomes vacant, they will find patrons to sell them their right, or to seem to sell it them till their turn

is served. I readily allow that simony is the natural offspring of patronage, as that is of the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth; but it must be evident to every person of common sense, that if the settlement in question is affirmed, nothing but the want of money will be able to prevent the most infamous and unfit persons from becoming ministers of this church. Every minister at his ordination is obliged to declare solemnly, and as in the presence of God, that he has not used any undue methods to procure his settlement, either by himself or his friends. And when this declaration is made by those in the circumstances of the present presentee, as it has been made by him, it must put an end to their moral character instead of establishing it. When a person begins his ministry with such a solemn prevarication, not to say perjury, what edification or profit to the church may be reaped from his ministry may be easily imagined. In controversies about settlements, the opposers of presentees are often reviled on account of their rank in life; they are represented as illiterate vulgar, incapable of judging of the talents and qualifications of ministers; but it seems patronage sanctifies every thing, and, like the popish sacraments, confers grace, and sense, and wisdom. Had this innkeeper, who is now the patron, been an inhabitant of the parish of Marykirk, and an opposer of this presentee, those who are now his friends would have held him in the utmost derision; but by his becoming patron, he immediately commences wise, just, and infallible; so mighty a thing is it to have credit for two hundred pounds, in the opinion of some men. I cannot look upon this

patron in the same light with any other patron. His right was a fresh purchase, with a visible design to provide for a son, whether qualified for the ministry or not; and it appears by this transaction, that the presentee's father thought as meanly of his son's talents as any of his opposers do. If he had thought that his son had as much merit as would recommend him to any patron or parish whatever, he would never have parted with 200*l.* to provide him in a settlement. No application was made to this patron, as is always the case with others; because his intention of conveying it to his son was known to every person from the time of the purchase. If it is said, that no simoniacal intention appears, I answer, that it appears as clearly as any criminal intention can ever be supposed to appear. May we not as fairly and legally infer the simoniacal intention from the circumstance of the purchase, and the settlement following upon it, as the lords of justiciary, in cases of murder, infer the *animus injuriandi*, or criminal intention, from the overt acts and behaviour of the pannel? And if this is not admitted, no criminal whatever can be condemned, as all crimes consist in intention. If this transaction has all the circumstances, appearances and consequences of a simoniacal transaction, as it must be owned it has, why in the name of common sense is it to be called by any other name? At this rate, a man might believe transubstantiation itself, and hold that accidents can subsist without a substance."

"In a word, you must either find this settlement simoniacal, or declare that simony never was nor can be committed by any person. If these things go on,

you may soon expect to see your churches filled with useless and immoral clergymen. If money is sufficient to give a right, patrons will be found ready to sell, and candidates to buy. What need have we of probity or character, if money does quite as well? What need have we of professors of divinity, except to cry out, *O cives! cives! quærenda pecunia primum est;* and if clandestine ordinations in distant presbyteries are allowed, they need not add, *Virtus post nummos.* Your churches will be *res in commercio,* and patronages transacted at fairs and markets; the price of patronages, as well as other provisions, will rise in proportion to the demand, and clergymen, paying so high for their settlements, must languish out the rest of their lives under a load of debt and misery. How honourable for our church would such a paragraph be in our public papers as this? 'We hear from Falkirk, that on Wednesday last, there was a great show of cattle, but little demand. Patronages bore a very high price, all those brought to market having been bought up the night before by an eminent dealer in horses, so that many clergymen were disappointed.' Nor is this supposition too extravagant: I have heard already of an eminent dealer in horses who intends to buy a benefice for his son, having discovered that he has no genius for his own profession. But dropping consequences, it is evident that the present transaction comes precisely within the limits of the acts of 1758 and 1759. At the time of it the college of Aberdeen were patrons of Marykirk. Mr. Brymer's friends offered and gave money for the presentation, as there could be no surer way of securing it than buying

the right; so that the presentee, by accepting said presentation, incurs *ipso facto* the sentence of deposition, according to the express tenor of said acts. Besides, it may be shown, that at the time of making these acts, the word *presentation* was used to signify a right of patronage, as well as a single *vice*, as it was not till of late years that this strictness of speaking obtained amongst us. Moreover, it is confidently asserted, that though Brymer, the patron, bargained ostensibly for the right of patronage, he was obliged, by a secret article, to dispone it to a certain gentleman after he had served his turn by it, and that it is already sold to another patron; so that a single *vice* or turn of presenting was the very thing bargained for. It is true, that at the synod the presentee's agent held up a piece of parchment, which he affirmed to be the right in question, but it might have been only a piece of an old drum-head, for ought I know; and a collusion betwixt the buyer and seller was so easy in this case, that no sort of stress can be laid upon that. If innkeepers are to be patrons of our churches, and have no sons willing to accept, it may be expected that the greatest drinkers will be generally preferred; and I am by no means sure that these will be the most eminent for learning, piety, and other ministerial qualifications. Whenever these are disregarded, and money is found sufficient to supply their place, the whole fabric of our constitution must be totally ruined. Upon the whole, the character of this assembly depends upon this day's decisions, and if this settlement is not found simoniacal, and reduced accordingly, your sentences will amount only to an advertisement to all persons in-

tending to purchase benefices, to get their fathers or friends to make the bargain for the patronage for their behoof, and that they be sure to get clandestinely into orders before-hand, in order to prevent any troublesome examination into their qualifications by the presbytery where the benefice lies. Such a plain countenancing of the grossest simony is what I cannot expect from an assembly that has the least regard to character or conscience; but if I am disappointed in this, I would beg leave to hint to any historian who is to write the history of our times, to draw a line at the present year, as Mr. Calderwood does at a certain period, with this inscription: 'Here end the sincere assemblies of the Church of Scotland.'

"As your decisions will be freely and impartially examined by the public, I would beg leave to know how you can avoid being considered as an assembly of venal and corrupt men, if you openly encourage corruption and venality in others, and make them the surest ways of introduction to benefices in this church. To prevent, if possible, such reproach, I beg leave to put you in mind of an awful passage of scripture, which applios to cases of this kind, and which has already been fulfilled, with regard to the presbytery of Fordoun, and the majority of last synod of Angus and Mearns: it is Malachi ii. 8, 9:—'But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial inthe law.' But as I find that quotations from scripture are disagree-

able to some members, I shall conclude with a few monkish verses, quoted by Johannes Andreas van der Muylen, professor of the civil law at Utrecht, in his book *De imperio conscientiæ circa hominis mores*, which I leave to the consideration of this assembly:

"Judicabit judices judex generalis,
Ibique non proderit dignitas papalis,
Sive sit episcopus, sive cardinalis,
Reus condemnabitur, nec dicetur qualis,
Ibi non proderit multum allegare,
Neque excipere, neque explicare,
Neque ad sedem apo-tolicam appellare,
Reus condemnabitur, nec dicetur quare,
Cogitate, miseri, qui et quales estis,
Quidque in hoc judicio dicere potestis,
Ubi neque locus erit codici nec digestis,
Reus condemnabitur, nec producetur testis."

The result, in this case, was not so favourable as in the former. Notwithstanding this strong appeal, the advocates of the system of Patronage were so powerful that the General Assembly affirmed the judgment of the courts below, in favour of the presentation, by a large majority.

The truth is, it would not be easy to conceive of a more formidable opponent than this remarkable man in a deliberatave body. His memory was such as to furnish him with apt quotations from every department of literature, with the peculiar adaptedness and pungency of which he frequently disconserted and sometimes demolished his opponent, and seldom failed to electrify the body which he addressed. His inexhaustible wit and humour also supplied him with a weapon which no one ever used with more

readiness or effect. It appeared as if no argument, no quotation, no *bon mot*, could ever take him by surprise. If any one ever attempted to play the wit at his expense, quick as lightning, flash after flash, of superior wit, would break from his lips, accompanied with a peculiar expression of his countenance, which, when he chose to indulge it, might be said to blaze with wit, which generally proved irresistible, and seldom failed completely to turn the laugh on his prostrate adversary.

In 1771, the subject of this Memoir had a correspondence with the Countess of Huntingdon, well known, for many years, in the religious world, not only as a fervently pious Christian, but also as a warm friend of Whitefield, and as an active and munificent promoter of the cause of truth and piety throughout Great Britain, and, indeed, as far as her power extended. This correspondence seems to have arisen on the part of Lady Huntingdon, who wished to consult Mr. Nisbet in regard to certain opinions which she considered as erroneous, and which then appeared to be gaining ground.

The only portion of this correspondence which has been preserved, consists of one of Mr. Nisbet's letters to that illustrious and excellent female, who seems to have lived only to do good, and who denied herself many of what were considered as the ordinary comforts of life, that she might have the more to give for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom. This letter appears to have been written in answer to a solicitation of his opinion in respect to a proposed public Conference between the friends of truth and the followers of Mr. Wesley. On this

subject, so interesting at that time to a portion of the religious public, Mr. Nisbet writes thus:

"*Montrose, 26th July*, 1770."

"*Madam*,"—"It must give pleasure to every lover of Christ and of true religion to hear that a person of your Ladyship's rank is so interested in the affairs of Christ's kingdom, in so degenerate an age as ours is. It would seem that Mr. Wesley, by his preaching and conferences, has been but too successful in seducing many of the ignorant and unwary into his notions. He has been long suspected of teaching doctrines inconsistent with the gospel of Christ, and tending to encourage fallen sinners in a reliance on their own works and merit for justification. In his last conference he seems to have taken off the mask, and openly to inculcate the old Popish doctrine of the merit of good works wrought by sinners in a fallen state, in direct opposition to the articles of the Church of England, which he must have subscribed, and to the doctrine which he has many times preached. It is easy to revive an old, exploded heresy, when we take no notice of what has been said against it, by torturing a single expression in Holy Scripture to give it countenance. The obscurity and ambiguity with which Mr. Wesley expressed himself, gives strong suspicion against his sincerity as well as his orthodoxy. If I had all Mr. Wesley's publications by me, I think it would be easy to show that every doctrine asserted and countenanced in his last Conference, is directly contrary to what he himself has often preached and published to the world as the true Gospel of Christ. But I see that

he is already provided with an answer to this, by acknowledging that he and his brethren have been disputing *only about words* for these thirty years past. It is true that General Councils and public Conferences have seldom been favorable to the interests of true religion, as men bring their own private prejudices and attachments to those Assemblies, and come resolved to maintain their former opinions, whatever may be said against them; not to add, that these meetings have led many to found their faith on human authority, rather than the testimony of God in the Holy Scriptures."

"But as the Conference alluded to is proposed by the acknowledged friends of true religion, who must know the situation of things; and besides, as it must tend to illustrate a point of fact, viz. that the doctrines now taught by Mr. Wesley and his brethren, are contrary to what is taught and believed by the truly orthodox ministers of Christ in Great Britain;—for these reasons I rejoice that it is to be held, and cheerfully contribute my poor testimony in support of the truth. None can have the vanity to believe that Scripture, reason and argument will have the effect to enlighten Mr. Wesley, who is a person of great learning and ingenuity, and cannot be supposed to err from ignorance. But perhaps the concurring testimony of many acknowledged orthodox ministers of Christ, may be sufficient to open the eyes of some of his followers, and to convince them that Mr. Wesley's new doctrines are countenanced only by the Papists and some Arminians. I shall be glad to hear of the issue of the intended Conference, and pray that God, by his Spirit, may so direct his faith-

ful servants, that they may be enabled to bear honourable testimony to the truth of Christ, and in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

"I am, Madam, your Ladyship's most obedient humble servant, CHARLES NISBET."

"The Countess of Huntingdon."

In the same year (1771), when Mr. Wesley's system of doctrine was attracting considerable attention, and when some measures were taken to draw to it the notice of the theologians of Scotland, Mr. Nisbet drew up a Review of that system, which, though not published at the time, was committed to the press a number of years afterwards in a popular periodical. This Review is a very honourable monument of the learning, taste, piety and orthodoxy of the author. He treats the erroneous system of that remarkable man with an urbanity, a force of reasoning, and a comprehensive clearness, which evince the hand of a scholar, a logician, and a divine of no ordinary character. Yet it is probable that if the subject of this memoir had undertaken to speak of Mr. Wesley and his opinions twenty or thirty years afterwards, when the character of both was more fully developed, he would hardly have called in question the "sincerity" of that eminent man. His *consistency* and his *orthodoxy* he would, no doubt, still have assailed with undiminished confidence; but he would probably have awarded to him the praise of honest zeal, and of no small usefulness, however mistaken and erratic some parts of his system.

CHAPTER III.

His Ministry in Scotland continued.

It was not only in the General Assembly that Mr. Nisbet appeared as the advocate of the rights of the people, against the encroachments of civil or ecclesiastical oppression. He was the uniform and ardent friend of this great cause, and whenever he had an opportunity of pleading it, he was ever faithful to his trust, and as able as faithful.

Not many years after his settlement in Montrose, the troubles commenced between Great Britain and her North American colonies. In this great contest, though he did not allow himself to violate the duty of a loyal subject, yet, in principle and feeling, he sided with the Colonies. His friend, Dr. Witherspoon, had, in 1768, removed to America, and was known there as the active, uncompromising patron of the Colonial claims and feelings. Mr. Nisbet, it is believed, substantially agreed with him in his general sentiments; and though, from the difference of his situation, not prepared to go all lengths with his now American friend, yet he felt and acted, so far as his sacred function called him to act, with the enlightened and patriotic Whigs of Great Britain of that day; considering the Colonies as having just grounds of complaint, and as pleading for rights which ought not to have been denied them. In short, Mr. Nisbet was a decided and warm friend of America in the

contest in which she was engaged; and manifested his friendship as far as he was allowed by his situation. And as this was no secret, it attracted the notice of the partizans of government, and drew upon him the frowns of many a tool of the administration.

Being called to preach on a public Fast appointed by government during the American war, he took his text from Daniel v. 5, 25: *In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick, upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote—And this is the writing that was written,* MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

The introduction to his discourse was in the following strongly marked and characteristic strain:

"We are this day called by our superiours to fast and afflict our souls; and they have not called us to this duty until they had given us abundant reason to do so. We have many enemies: our sins and follies are many also; yet we do not chuse to be told of them. Prosperity intoxicates men's minds; and even a great share of adversity is insufficient to open their eyes, and bring them to their senses. They love to be deceived, and hope to the last, till the punishment of their sins actually falls upon them. Nineveh is the only instance in history of a people repenting and obtaining a delay of their punishment. To discharge our duty with as little offence as possible, we have chose the words of this text for the subject of our discourse on this occasion. They served to awaken a mighty monarch, who does not appear to have ever thought before. After the destruction of Nine-

veh, Babylon was the principal seat of the Assyrian monarch, though that empire did not continue long in vigour after the above period. Under Nebuchadnezzar it was terrible and extensive; but the weakness and incapacity of his grandson Belshazzar brought it to an end, as we are told in the chapter from which our text is taken, and as it had been long ago foretold by the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 45, 46, 47. Cyrus, the instrument chosen of God for that purpose, was named, long before his birth, by the prophet; and on this account, that he was raised up to execute God's judgments against Babylon, and to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem, he is called 'the Lord's anointed.' The Babylonian empire consisted of a number of conquered provinces, whose princes were altogether kings. Many of these had revolted, on account of the injuries they had suffered by the Babylonian monarchs. An empire founded in violence, and stained with blood, can never be called secure, and nourishes in its bosom the seeds of its dissolution. An arbitrary prince rules over enemies, whose weakness alone obliges them to pretend to be his friends; but who are ready to seize the first opportunity of revenging their wrongs, by abandoning, betraying or destroying their tyrant. The Medes and Persians were made use of in the destruction of Babylon, and were part of the nations that had been subject to its dominion in the time of Nebuchadnezzar."

On another public fast day, during the continuance of our revolutionary contest, the members of the Town Council of Montrose, who were always in the habit of attending public worship in Mr. Nisbet's

church, and of occupying a pew in a conspicuous situation assigned to them in their official character, were seated as usual in their appropriate place. Perceiving, soon after the commencement of the discourse, that its character was likely to be by no means agreeable to their taste, they rose in a body and left the Church. Mr. Nisbet, stretching forth his hand toward the seat which they had just occupied, said with emphasis, as they withdrew—"The wicked flee when no man pursueth."

It is hardly necessary to say, that things of this kind drew upon him no little odium from various quarters. But his great talents, his pre-eminent learning, and his acknowledged piety and faithfulness made such an impression on the public mind in his favour, that the friends of the administration did not consider it as either wise or safe to do more than to smile at the wit and sarcasm, and complain of the censure, of which he so frequently and severely made them the subjects.

Mr. Nisbet, however, in taking this course, was not alone. Some of the best men in Scotland sympathized with him in his principles and preaching, and thus contributed not a little to divide and disarm the odium which might otherwise have borne more heavily on an unsupported individual. Among others his venerable and highly respected friend, the Rev. Dr. Erskine, of Edinburgh, substantially agreed with him, and in his preaching and publications from the press stood forth as the friend of America. A short time before the breaking out of the war which terminated in the independence of the United States, Dr. Erskine published a pamphlet, entitled "Shall

we go to war with our brother Benjamin?" He, too, was charged with preaching and praying in a manner highly offensive to the advocates of the American war. When besought by a personal friend to pray differently for the king and his ministers, he said—"Do I not pray for them every sabbath?"—his friend replied—"Yes, but you pray for them as if they were the greatest culprits in all his majesty's dominions." These circumstances, no doubt, among others of a still more interesting character, led to a warm attachment between these two friends, which gave rise to much intercourse between them while Mr. Nisbet remained in Scotland, and to a confidential and affectionate correspondence, after his removal to this country, which continued as long as Dr. Erskine lived. Some specimens of this correspondence will be given in a subsequent chapter.

While Mr. Nisbet proved himself a warm friend to the enlightened claims of civil liberty, he was no less awake to the rights of conscience and of the Church. In 1781, he prepared a series of "Letters to the members of the established Church of Scotland," in which his views of the unhappy policy pursued by the courts of the Church, are presented with great strength and eloquence. Argument, learning, and satire are all brought, with much ability, to bear on the subject. In one of the letters, a draft of a proposed petition to the king is found, in which faithful warning, united with intense sarcasm, shows the hand of a great and good man, supremely devoted to what he deemed the best interests of the church, and of the nation. These Letters appear to have been five in number. Only two of them are found among

his papers in any good measure complete. Whether all, or indeed any of them were ever published cannot now be known. Even the two which remain in manuscript, do not appear to have been entirely prepared for the press; and the publication of them without the others would hardly be doing justice either to the author or the cause.

In the year 1782, a special effort seems to have been made in Scotland to obtain from the Parliament a repeal of the Patronage Act, and restoring to the churches of the Scottish establishment the right to choose their own ministers. At such a time it was impossible for him to be idle. Accordingly, there was found among his papers, a series of Resolutions, in his own hand writing, drawn up and adopted at a large public meeting, of which the following is a copy, and which will sufficiently explain themselves.

"*Montrose, July* 15, 1782.

"A considerable number of the Elders, and the greater part of the inhabitants of this town and parrish, who are members of the established Church, having this day met, and being informed that attempts are making, in several parts of this kingdom, to procure a repeal of the Patronage Act, they judged it their duty to join the other parishes and societies in Scotland, which intend to petition for a repeal of said Act; and unanimously agreed to the following Resolutions, viz.

I. "That patronage is not only contrary to the Scriptures, and the natural liberties of mankind, but also a direct encroachment on the rights and constitution of the Church, established by the 5th Act of

the first parliament of William and Mary, and ratified by the Treaty of Union."

II. "That Patronage, though restored by Queen Anne's Tory Ministry in 1712, was not received or submitted to by the judicatories of this Church, but repeatedly remonstrated against, till about forty years ago, when a corrupt party began to prevail, and the original principles of this Church were in a great measure forgotten. Nay Patronage has been so uniformly reckoned a grievance in this Church, that even those General Assemblies whose oppressive measures have given so much offence to the members of this Church, have never failed to instruct their commissioners to petition for a repeal of said Act, if a favourable opportunity offered."

III. "That although the pretended intention of the Patronage Act was to prevent heats and divisions; yet, by the experience of more than forty years, it has been found that the said Act, and the violent proceedings of Church Judicatories in compliance with it, has occasioned the greatest divisions ever known in this Church; and has driven from its communion some hundreds of congregations of well disposed persons, who are still of the principles of this Church, but who could not submit to such tyrannical usage."

IV. "That the said Act, restoring Patronages, by putting the power of settlements solely in the Patron, has introduced a servile and dependent spirit among the Clergy of this Church, whereby their votes and determinations are entirely governed by their Patrons, or friends that procured their settlement; which

makes them most unfit guardians and representatives of a free and independent church."

V. "That, in consequence of this dependent spirit, the General Assemblies of this Church, composed mostly of such men as patronage only could have introduced, are become so corrupt, slavish, and tyrannical in their proceedings, that they are the terror and aversion of all the friends of religion and liberty; as by their foolish and arbitrary proceedings they are lessening the numbers of the members of this Church every year; and thus openly wasting that body which it is their duty to preserve."

VI. "That if some stop is not soon put to these destructive proceedings, which certainly cannot be expected from General Assemblies, who are the principal authors of them, this Church must soon be reduced to a very contemptible number, and all its benefices reduced to absolute sinecures; a circumstance that must hasten the ruin of our Church establishment; and as there already exist parishes, consisting of only two, five, eight, and ten individuals, the rest being mostly dissenters, this period can be at no great distance."

VII. "That Patronage gives an opportunity for simoniacal pactions, which, though condemned by the laws of all Christian countries, can never be prevented where Patronage is established. And, though there is good reason to believe that sundry benefices in this Church have been bought with money; it is often impossible to make legal proof of these deeds of darkness, whereof even the guilty actors are evidently ashamed."

VIII. "And that the people who remain in the

communion of the Church, by the habit of submitting to oppression, have, in a great measure, lost the spirit of liberty, and become the willing slaves of any that pretend dominion over them."

IX. "For these reasons, we hereby declare our resolution to join with the other parishes and societies who have notified their resolution to petition the Legislature for the repeal of this most pernicious and destructive Act; and we appoint these our resolutions to be notified to the Constitutional Society of correspondence at Glasgow, and to be published in the Caledonian Mercury, the Edinburgh Evening Courant, and the London Chronicle; and we hereby promise to defray a proportional part of the expense of the application to Parliament, along with all those other societies who shall join in said application."

Although Mr. Nisbet, by thus opposing, both in church and state, the policy most acceptable in the "high places" of the land, incurred not a little odium, he held a place in public estimation too high to be contemned, and too firm to be shaken. But not only was the popular voice strong in his favour. Even some of the noblesse of the country were constrained to do honour to his exalted character, and to show that they knew how to estimate pre-eminent accomplishments and worth, however unbending to the authority of the court. Accordingly, the subject of this Memoir was favoured with the peculiar friendship and confidence of a large number not only of the most distinguished and excellent of the clergy and literati of Scotland; but also of some individuals of both sexes belonging to noble families, who delighted to testify their veneration for the piety, the talents,

and the extraordinary erudition which all parties ascribed to him. Among a number of names which might be mentioned as examples of this friendship, those of the Earl of Buchan, and the Countess of Leven and Melville, in Scotland, and of Lady Huntingdon, before mentioned, in England, are particularly specified, because some remains of their correspondence are still preserved among the papers of this remarkable man.

A few specimens of the letters of the Countess of Leven will, doubtless, be interesting to the reader, as examples of plain, simple, unpretending, but enlightened Christian friendship, equally honourable to the illustrious female by whom they were written, and the venerable minister to whom they are addressed.

The first is without date as to the year, but probably written about the year 1778 or 1779.

"*Melville House, Sept. 7th.*

"*Sir,*"

"As I have a great esteem for your character, and some attachment to your name,* I take the liberty to write a few lines to you concerning a book which is in your possession, and which, at present, occasions a good deal of speculation. I need not, after saying this, add the name of the book, which I am not thoroughly acquainted with. The author's name is *Nostrodamus.* It would be doing my Lord and me

* The Earl of Leven had married Miss *Wilhelmina Nisbet,* of a family which, though it bore the name of the subject of this Memoir, was not known to bear any relation to him, of either consanguinity or affinity.

a favour if you would take the trouble to cause to be written out a few of the most remarkable passages, alluding to these times, and send them by post."

"Should this correspondence prove an introduction to future acquaintance, it will bring about a wished for event. If it is agreeable and convenient for you, my Lord and I will be glad to see you, either at Melville House, or Edinburgh."

"I beg you will forgive this trouble; and that you may believe me to be, with esteem,"

"Sir, your humble servant,"

"W. LEVEN."

"*Rev. Mr. Nisbet, Montrose.*"

The book mentioned by Lady Leven is a very rare and a very curious one. The author of this Memoir never saw a copy of it excepting the one possessed by Dr. Nisbet, of which he often heard the Doctor speak with no small interest. *Nostrodamus* was a celebrated physician and astrologer of France, who flourished in the sixteenth century. His prophecies, like those of the Delphic Oracle, were interesting chiefly on account of their mysterious and equivocal character. It was not difficult to find the fulfilment of an oracle so expressed that it might be made to mean almost any thing. Dr. Nisbet considered this work as one of the most singular productions of modern times, and often amused himself in comparing its pretended predictions with late events.

From the same.

"*Nov.* 29, 1779."

"*Rev. Sir,*"

"I would have written before now, to inquire after

you, and to thank you for your kind visit, had I not waited for a frank; and, in the mean time, a very mounful event occurred, which gave much concern to this family; and I truly believe that the death of our worthy friend, Lady Northesk, has given very general concern. Her own family have sustained a very great loss. But I have no time to enlarge upon this extensive subject."

"I am much obliged to you for the frank manner in which you expressed a desire to comply with my request for a reading of your Lecture, had it been written: and still more by your offer to gratify my inclination, recollecting your pious meditations on that rich Psalm, and writing them out for me. I cannot deny myself so far as to decline so instructive an offer, though sensible it must be attended with considerable trouble to you. I do, therefore, thankfully accept of it. And, when a leisure hour may permit, I beg you may fulfil the further offer you made of letting me have your thoughts, now and then, on some further passages of scripture as they may occur. I have an interleaved Bible, in which I have collected some Annotations, particularly all that are to be found in Mr. Hervey's writings (should be glad to know your opinion of these writings.) It will be doing me a great favour to send me some notes for that purpose."

"All this family join in best respects to you; and I beg you may believe me, with much esteem,"

"Dear sir, your humble servant,"

"W. Leven."

"*Rev. Mr. Nisbet.*"

From the same.

"*March 9th*, 1780."

"*Dear Sir*,"

"I received yours of February 21st, which gave me much satisfaction, and for which I do most sincerely thank you. My good correspondents, and, of course, my inclination for writing, are much fallen off of late. But when I meet with one whose sentiments agree with my own in so many particulars as you have yet had occasion to mention, it encourages me to proceed, in hopes of receiving profit. As to your sentiments of *Sermons*, they give me much pleasure, if I mistake them not. I suppose you give the preference to sermons which affect the heart, which many condemn. For my part, those sermons which do not affect my heart, and draw tears from my eyes, have little effect upon me at all. They go in at one ear and out at the other, without making any lodgment in the memory. Your verdict concerning Commentators is also, in general, most just. I never met with one of the few I have seen, without observing the coldness with which they could treat of the most interesting truths. I thought you might know of one of another spirit; who wrote with more feeling than the generality of Commentators do; and with another view than multiplying their critical notes and observations. This made me prize Mr. Hervey's writings. He writes with such warmth, and his ideas are so exalted."

"I am much obliged, and much edified by your notes upon the other verses of the XXXII. Psalm. I say it without an idea of flattery (indeed my opinion is little worth having), that I think you would make

a most excellent Commentator. And this opinion, I dare say, is not peculiar to me. I should be much indebted to you for any addition to the notes already collected in my interleaved Bible, which are not many; mostly confined to Mr. Hervey's. I cannot name any particular texts or places. Whatever strikes or occurs naturally to yourself will be most agreeable, and from time to time, as you find leisure and inclination. I suppose notes from old lectures (if you have them) abridged, would answer very well. But I have some idea that you said you did not write your lectures, which is a pity."

"I am glad to find that your health was improved when you wrote last. I hope your family are all well, to which I am persuaded, from your habits, and the character of your mind, you are much attached."

"I have not been so well for a week past, as for some time before. The degree of health to which I have been restored is a great blessing, and demands my most thankful acknowledgments to my Almighty Deliverer. O that more precious fruits may grow from this new lease of life than I have ever brought forth hitherto; and all be dedicated to Him who has yet spared and redeemed from the power of the grave!"

"I tire of writing, so will add no more, but ask your opinion of Baxter's Saint's Rest abridged, and his 'Dying Thoughts'—'Converse with God in Solitude'—all abridged, by B. Fawcett. If you noticed a letter in the newspaper (London Chronicle) from Mr. Wesley, concerning Popery, I think you would approve of all. I like those pieces of Baxter very much. Perhaps you have not seen them in their

present state. My Lord, and all the young people, send their best respects. I am, with much esteem,

"Dear sir, your humble servant,

"W. LEVEN."

"*Rev. Mr. Nisbet.*"

"P. S. You have heard that Mr. Taylor, of Paisley, goes to Glasgow, and Mr. Burnside to Dumfries. A Mr. Buchanan, from Glasgow, is spoken of for Leith. I think that is his name. Mr. Boner might have gone to Glasgow had he inclined; but (what is very uncommon) wisely thought himself *too young* for such a charge; and that it might have been a loss to him in the most essential respects."

From the same.

"*Melville House, Nov.* 4, 1783."

"*Rev. Sir,*"

"I had the favour of yours, and really take it as a *favour;* for, although your pen writes readily, it cannot be called 'the pen of a ready writer.' Neither is mine, I am sure, for, whatever it has been, I find a great change. I wish I could say that indolence, much as I dislike the idea of *that*, was the only cause of my unwillingness to write. But if I ever had any genius for it, it is now lost. Of this, I must not delay to give you a specimen, to convince you that I am not insensible of your favour; and, therefore, write, perhaps a few, perhaps many lines, in answer to your truly valuable letter, for which I thank you, and give you joy of your victory. As matters seem to go on slowly, it will probably come to be another outgo, if then it be restored."

"Your expectations concerning the effects of peace have been different from mine. I could earnestly wish you had been right; but I always dreaded that when the war ended, people would then imagine they had less to fear, and their minds, consequently become dissipated, especially with regard to secular affairs, as it made a new opening for trade. As for the other warnings from Providence, most awful indeed have they been; and I trust that those who have been more immediately concerned, have been led to repentance by the judgments of God: but at this distance they seem to have had no effect. Neither do the direful effects of war, or threatened famine, which so many have suffered by, appear to have accomplished the purpose for which they were sent. By all accounts, we continue to 'revolt more and more.' Extravagance and luxury daily increase. God only knows what the consequence will be! He knows what we deserve. No nation has better reason to say, that 'judgment is his strange work;' and that 'it is of his mercy that we are not consumed.'"

"As for the Unitarian sect which you mention as lately introduced at Montrose, it is pretty plain that God has not joined them together, therefore endeavours may be used to put them asunder. Yet I dare say, open opposition is the readiest way to make these small beginnings grow and flourish. I remember to have heard that Barclay, the Quaker, was sadly disappointed that he was not persecuted. I just now read a passage, which I will transcribe, as somewhat to the purpose. 'It is meet we should tremble for fear, and stand amazed when we behold

the most grievous judgments of God; how he confounds the understanding of the learned of this world; whilst many persons not indeed destitute of good natural understanding and sagacity, are so offended at the great simplicity of the holy Scriptures, that they have found out divers ways of inverting the sense of clear words, and use their utmost endeavours to deny their plain meaning; draw them to a foreign sense, and accommodate them to the taste of their corrupt reason. Although the words themselves be so manifestly perspicuous as to glare in their eyes, the example of those men, who look upon the words of St. John, in the first chapter of his Gospel, as divinely inspired, and nevertheless, impugn the eternal divinity and majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ, ought to render us cautious and circumspect, that *we* do not pervert the holy writings to our own destruction; on the contrary, that we strive, with the greatest earnestness, to receive the plain truths of God, with plain and honest hearts, and earnestly pray to him for the true sense thereof.' O Lord, incline us ever to hear, to receive every truth from thy word, and every dictate of thy Spirit with docility and love!"

"My Lord, and all the family send their best respects."

"Ever respectfully yours,"

"W. LEVEN."

"*Rev. Mr. Nisbet.*"

Several years before Mr. Nisbet was invited to America, he entered his eldest son, Thomas, as a student in the University of Edinburgh. On one occasion, when the young man returned to his studies in

that Institution, his father gave him a letter to the Earl of Buchan,* commending him to the paternal notice of that nobleman, with whom his father had been long and intimately acquainted. The following is the letter borne by the son; and the reply of the Earl is added.

"*Montrose, 22d October*, 1782."

"*My Lord*,"

"If I were not fully assured of your Lordship's goodness and condescension, I would not have taken the liberty, though at your express desire, of presenting my son to your patronage and protection, as I hereby do. I should have reckoned them words of course, like the offers of service usually made by courtiers. But as I have a quite different opinion of your Lordship, and have been informed of the care you have taken of encouraging youth in the study of letters, I would gladly hope that the very circumstance of being presented to your Lordship, and the observing, if he were capable to observe, what lustre the study of letters adds to persons of rank, may excite in my boy an ambition to deserve the approbation of the declared patron of letters and liberty. Your Lordship will find him extremely raw and unfurnished with ideas, as must be the case with boys

* This is the Lord *Buchan*, who sent to General Washington a box made of the Oak which sheltered the great *Sir William Wallace*, after the battle of Falkirk, and to whom the American Chief, with so much characteristic delicacy and dignity, bequeathed back the interesting gift in his last will, not willing to take on himself the selection of the man most worthy of possessing it. This Scottish Nobleman seems to have been an enlightened, honest, eminently patriotic and worthy man.

educated in a country burgh, and merely as the rude block out of which an image is to be cut by the skill of the statuary."

"The gentlemen of this country, (I scruple to call them Freeholders) appear to be quite unworthy of your Lordship's late address, and it would be a transgression of the express precepts of the gospel to tender it to them. For the most part they seem to have no idea of an equal representation, or indeed of any representation at all, except such as may occasionally profit their sons and dependents. Some late incidents contributed to carry the business of making game votes as far as it could go in this country. It is now considered as the law of the land, and though some gentlemen for a time affected to complain of it, each great proprietor grudges to be deprived of the support of his subordinate myrmidons. It is with great concern that I observe that our present Premier seems to have referred the business of the Caledonian Band to the arbitrament of the Treasurer of the Navy. I wish that the good genius of Great Britain had destined your Lordship a more equitable judge, but I am not without hopes that the representation of the state of this country, which will be made by the noblemen and gentlemen concerned, and to which the Lord Advocate cannot yet be a stranger, as well as the distinguished loyalty and good character of the solicitors, may make some impression even on a person of prerogative principles. Poor Scotland can never expect to reap any benefit from the late act for arming the people, nor indeed to be any thing more than a nursery of the forces of the Crown, if by any unlucky

means the present project should be set aside. I am, with unfeigned respect,"

"My Lord,"

"Your Lordship's most obedient,"

"Humble servant,"

"CHARLES NISBET."

"*The Right Honourable, the Earl of Buchan, Edinburgh.*"

The Reply.

"*Edinburgh, November 2d*, 1782."

"*Reverend Sir,*"

"Your acceptable letter of the 22d ult. found me at dinner with the Lord Provost, by which means I was deprived of the pleasure of seeing the bearer of it, to whom I shall pay the attention, during the course of his studies at Edinburgh, which I imagine you would desire."

"The great object of education is to form good and useful citizens, and to give a proper direction to the energy of youth."

"I flatter myself that I possess the faculty, or 'knack,' as we vulgarly call it, of discerning the forte and the foible of young people, and of laying hold of both or either to set the intellectual machine in motion. I shall be very glad to exercise this gift, and bestow it on the son of a respectable and very singular Scotch Clergyman."

"I say *singular*, not because I think it rare to meet with a respectable clergyman in our Kirk. God forbid! Very far from it. But I am sorry to say, that I find it *very singular* for a Scotch Clergyman to

hold so high a place as you do among the friends of liberty, and the English Constitution of government. I wish I could call it *British*."

"Your *alliterations* on the C. B. are much relished."*

"I am, Reverend Sir, with regard, your obliged humble servant, BUCHAN."

"*Rev. Mr. Nisbet, Montrose.*"

Mr. Nisbet to the Earl of Buchan.

"*Montrose, Nov. 12th,* 1782."

"*My Lord,*"

"Your Lordship's letter of the 2d instant, which I duly received, entirely justified, but could not exceed the opinion I had conceived of the Earl of Buchan. I greatly respect the Scotch Peerage; but I feel a far greater respect for persons possessed of elevated sentiments, public and private virtue, and a true regard to the welfare of our country. Poor Caledonia has suffered and still suffers much, by the rarity of these qualities in men of rank. It is now visible, that neither high descent, great wealth, nor a mysterious and haughty behaviour will command the esteem of freeborn Britons, nor even of degenerate Scotchmen, even though attended with politeness of address, connections with ministry, and possession of the most lucrative offices. Since we daily see persons possessed of all these advantages, as far from obtaining as they are from deserving the re-

* There is an allusion here to a literary *jeu d' esprit* of a very ingenious and highly amusing character, which Dr. Nisbet, a short time before, when on a visit to the Earl of Leven's family at Melville House, had sent to the Earl of Buchan.

gard of their fellow subjects. I hope your Lordship has discovered the true secret of becoming important, by meriting the esteem of the public, instead of challenging it as due by hereditary right, without merit. In private life, mankind know their friends, and respect them: though I am sorry to observe that with regard to their sovereigns they have generally paid the greatest honours to those who do the most mischief. It is natural for great men to desire to rule, and to have an extensive influence among their inferiors in rank, and those are not last in feeling this desire who are conscious of their title to the respect of the public; but if I had the honour to be admitted of their privy council, I would respectfully hint to them, that they mistook the road to influence and esteem, if they thought of forcing it by authority, or attracting it by outward show, and the trappings of false dignity. To convince the public that one wishes their welfare will establish a greater and more permanent interest than legions of superiority votes, or the temporary power of distributing places and pensions. Your Lordship has laboured to convince your countrymen that you understand their interest, and are zealous to promote it. I hope that they will at last be convinced of it, and that the man of the people will soon be a more honourable, as it is certainly a more solid distinction, than the friend of the king. The order of nature requires that some should be exalted above others; but if those whom Providence has exalted, do not show a desire to benefit, as well as to command others, they have no reason to complain when they are neglected or despised by their inferiors. A little benevolence, con-

descension and humanity goes a great way, when it comes from persons of quality. And as the virtues of men of rank bear a higher proportion to those of others in the esteem of the public than that of gold to silver, it is not a little surprising that persons of distinction should be so negligent in acquiring, and so parsimonious in circulating, this sort of coin. With the abilities they already possess, they might have far greater influence, and benefit their country much more into the bargain, if they took care to give them a proper direction. A visible regard to virtue and religion in the representative of a great family, will go farther to the reformation of their dependents and domestics than many sermons and admonitions. Scotchmen, above all others, love to be led by authority, and to imitate the example of their superiors; so that those are surely blameable who do not acquire influence among us, where it is so easily gained. If the mere shadow of popularity, and an artful, though counterfeit, imitation of public virtue, have raised some wicked and designing men to great esteem and authority, what may not we expect from true and permanent patriotism, which is now become almost a title of reproach? I should have asked pardon for using a style so different from that in use, or rather have declined using it at all, were I not persuaded that I know the person to whom I am writing. I know that it is commonly objected to political reformers, that their notions are quite visionary, and that they expect from men a higher degree of virtue than can be found among them, and that they dream of a Republic like Plato's. But surely it is no Utopian dream to expect a much higher degree of virtue and

public spirit than is presently the *ton* among great men. That which has been done, may be done again; and human nature may yet produce as shining characters as it has ever produced. I have been much provoked at hearing human infirmity pleaded in excuse for the most scandalous enormities, as if men could not be men of virtue unless they were canonisable saints; and as if it were only an imperfection to be an infamous knave, or a mischievous tyrant. I wish our times were showing some symptoms of reformation by the appearance of some more characters similar to your Lordship. I consider you as the Apostle of the higher classes, and hope you will preach so as to make many converts. I find the degeneracy of our people prophesied in the Canon law, but lest I should have lost credit with your Lordship in quoting antiquity, I assure you that the following passage is copied from the Decretum Gratiani, printed at Paris, 1550, Distinct. 56, fol. 100, Col. 4. 'Bonifacius Martyr, Scribens Regi Anglorum,' Si Gens Anglorum, ait, 'sicut per istas provincias divulgatum est, et nobis in Francia et in Italia improperatur, et ab ipsis Paganis improperium nobis objicitur, spretis legalibus connubiis, adulterando, et luxuriando ad instar sodomiticæ gentis fœdam vitam duxerit, de tali commixtione meretricum æstimandum est, degeneres populos et ignobiles et furentes libidine fore procreandos, et ad extremum universam plebem ad deteriora et ignobiliora vergentem, et novissime nec bello seculari fortem, nec in fide stabilem, et nec honorabilem hominibus, nec Deo amabilem esse venturam.' I am afraid that if any body should write the King of Eng-

land in such a style at this day, he would quickly have the same honour conferred on him as St. Boniface. I am with sincere respect,"

"My Lord,"

"Your Lordship's much obliged,"

"Humble servant,"

"CHARLES NISBET."

"*The Right Honourable, the Earl of Buchan, Edinburgh.*"

At the Commencement in Princeton College in the year 1783, the Trustees of that Institution, with cordial unanimity, conferred upon the subject of this Memoir the degree of Doctor of Divinity. He was then in the 48th year of his age. His reputation had been for several years well and honourably known on this side of the Atlantic; and his affectionate friend, Dr. Witherspoon, the President of the College, delighted, no doubt, to co-operate in bestowing this testimonial of respect on his old friend and beloved brother. Academical Degrees were never of much value. They are every day becoming less and less worthy of regard. But it would be happy for Colleges, as well as for the learned professions, if collegial honours were generally bestowed with as enlightened a regard to intellectual and literary merit as in the case of this distinguished man. It is not improbable that this public testimonial of respect and esteem would have been given at an earlier period, had the intercourse between this country and Great Britain been regular and amicable. But a seven year's war between the United States and that country had

scarcely closed. During the continuance of the contest, the college at Princeton was in a great measure abandoned; and the usual interchange of kind offices between Americans and Britons had been almost entirely suspended.

CHAPTER IV.

His Invitation and Removal to the United States.

Soon after the return of peace, measures were taken to establish a new College in the town of *Carlisle*, in Cumberland county, Pennsylvania, one hundred and twenty miles west of Philadelphia. Among the gentlemen most zealous and active in founding this institution, were the Hon. John Dickinson, then Governor of the State of Pennsylvania, and celebrated as the author of some eloquent and popular publications connected with American Independence; Dr. Benjamin Rush, William Bingham, Esquire, Henry Hill, Esquire, and several others, distinguished for their wealth, patriotism, and public spirit. This institution received the name of Dickinson College, in honour of the eminent statesman and political writer who nominally took the lead in its establishment, and who was also its most liberal benefactor. This name it still bears. Its erection was no sooner agreed upon, and in some good degree realized, in the year 1783, than the attention of the Board of Trustees was directed to Doctor Nisbet, as the first President* of their new College. This choice

* In the Charter and laws of Dickinson College, the title of the presiding officer was "Principal," and by that title was Dr. Nisbet addressed in all official acts. But as this title is scarcely known, in any other instance, out of Scotland; and as to the ear of a large por-

was made on the 8th day of April, 1784, not only with unanimity, but with a warmth and cordiality which indicated the peculiarly high estimation in which his character was held on this side of the Atlantic. Measures were immediately taken to apprise him of the choice, and to urge him to accept of his new appointment. Besides the official communication of the Board of Trustees, Mr. Dickinson and Dr. Rush* each addressed to him several private letters, in which, with great fervour and eloquence, the attractions presented by the office to which he was chosen, were earnestly laid before him; promising him every thing that wealth, honour, and Christian kindness could bestow, if he would leave his native country, and accept the chair to which he was elected. This strain of eloquent importunity, and of high-wrought glowing anticipation, especially characterized the letters of Dr. Rush, and was adapted to make a deep impression on the mind of one who had never seen the new world to which he was invited, and who knew not from experience how to estimate its habits or its institutions.

The fact is, the establishment of Dickinson Col-

tion of the American community it would not convey a very definite meaning—the title "President" is here and elsewhere used, as more in accordance with American usage; as more universally intelligible; and quite as perfectly in accordance with substantial fact.

* Dr. Benjamin Rush had received his Medical education in the University of Edinburgh; had been acquainted with Dr. Witherspoon in Scotland; had some agency in prevailing on him to accept the presidentship of the College of New Jersey; and, it is believed, during his residence in Britain, also made the acquaintance of Doctor Nisbet. He returned from Scotland to Philadelphia in the year 1769.

lege was not now called for, either by the resources of the country, or by its literary wants. The "University of Pennsylvania," in Philadelphia, on the one hand, and "the College of New Jersey," at Princeton, on the other, furnished all the means of instruction which were then really demanded, and indeed more than could receive adequate patronage in the impoverished and embarrassed state of the country. The small number of students in both these institutions plainly showed that another was not required. But some movements of the Legislature of Pennsylvania, in 1779, in founding and endowing the "University," had exceedingly disobliged a number of gentlemen in Philadelphia, and none more than Dr. Rush. He indulged a strong animosity against the Rev. Dr. Ewing, the "Provost" of the University, and little less against the Rev. Dr. Witherspoon, the President of the College at Princeton. From this animosity, there is little doubt, arose, at least in part, the plan of founding a new College at Carlisle. Even the clergy, and other literary men in the immediate neighbourhood of Carlisle, did not at first see either the wisdom or the practicability of establishing the new institution. But the unwearied zeal and eloquence of Dr. Rush, and the sanguine hopes and promises of the opulent gentlemen in Philadelphia, who lent their names, and pledged their purses in its behalf, at length removed every difficulty. Objections were obviated. Prospects were made to appear fair. A Charter was obtained; and the College set in motion with flattering hopes of success.

All this might have been fair and proper enough

had the personal and domestic comfort of none been implicated but those who were acquainted with our country, and capable of estimating the character and prospects of the projected institution. But the first, and indeed the most vital step; nay, that which was relied on for giving life and vigour and success to the whole plan, was to invite a learned and venerated stranger, who was wholly unable to estimate the probabilities of the case, to leave a comfortable station at home, and commit himself to the fortunes of a new and hazardous enterprise.

This invitation was one of very serious import. The venerable man to whom it was directed had now passed the meridian of life; was in a very important sphere of usefulness as a pastor; was greatly respected and beloved by a large circle of friends; was favoured with a temporal support equal to all his wants; was surrounded with the most ample means of gratifying his literary and pious taste; and more unfit than most men of his talents and learning, to be a pioneer in the track of a dubious enterprise, or to cope with, and overcome the difficulties of a new institution, and of a country just starting in its career of independence, and national cultivation. We may, therefore, naturally suppose that it cost him many a painful conflict before he could persuade himself to give up all the advantages which he enjoyed, and to cast himself upon all the contingencies of an arduous and untried undertaking.

While his mind was agitated with the decision of a question so important to the future prospects of himself and his family, his old friend, the Countess

of Leven and Melville, addressed to him the two following letters.

"*Melville House, July 26th*, 1784."

"*Dear Sir*,"

"I received yours, with the inclosed. The day on which it came to hand I have forgotten, being wholly engrossed by the present distress in this family. Lord Balgonie's second son, one of the finest little creatures I ever saw, has been near three weeks ill of a worm fever, so that his life is despaired of, and, to all appearance, he cannot live long. I must leave all reflections upon this melancholy event to your pious mind. For my part, I am so overcome with the thought of God's goodness in bestowing so many comforts of this nature, and continuing them so long, that I cannot get utterance to speak of it. It well becomes us to be submissive to his divine will in all things. Parting with such bewitching comforts is not an easy duty: but God, by his goodness, which endureth continually, and is ever a present help in time of need, can make his grace sufficient for us, and his strength perfect in our weakness. My dearly beloved Mary—like the mother of our Lord, ponders things in her heart, and truly behaves in the most exemplary manner. Calm and quiet as a weaned child, waiting the Lord's will, and adoring him as the author of all her mercies, and justifying him when calling for what he gave. I could write a long time on this sweet but melancholy subject, did not my duty call me to be with her almost every hour, when she is not reposing for rest; and, indeed, I am wonderfully enabled to do more than could be

expected from my small bodily strength, and present feelings. But, to the praise of God be it said, I have ever found this to be the case."

"I cannot mention the half of the thoughts which occur to my mind upon perusing your letter and the enclosed. Only this, in general, I think is plain, that you ought to be in no hurry with your positive determination; as the foundation of the College seems not yet to be laid. I said before that it would be a dreadful idea to me to say any thing against a clear call in Providence: and also it would give me pain to think of counteracting a design and earnest wish of my kind friend, Dr. Rush, whose name, upon *one* particular account, especially, will ever be dear to me and all this family; and I should be sorry he should ever know that I wrote to you upon this subject. But, at the same time, as a fool may give a wise man good counsel, I cannot help saying what occurs to me on this subject. I find, from what I can learn, that the whole originates from Dr. R. His temper is warm and lively, and has the same impression upon the people there, that his importunate expostulations have had upon you. His eloquence I have had much experience of by a long correspondence with this family; and by his persevering, and overcoming all Dr. W's difficulties, which were many and great, though small, I think, when compared with yours.* How do you know whether the *forty* members of the Board of Trustees, of whom you have heard, will all continue of *one mind*, especially as they are composed of *all sects?* How will the duty of teaching

* The Countess here probably refers to the importunity which drew Dr. Witherspoon from Scotland, in which Dr. Rush had also a share.

three hours every day agree with you? How do you know but that Dr. —. is in the right, and that he is really your friend, in dissuading you from going? He is a good man, and we should not suppose that mercenary views would induce him to mislead a brother. Have you a turn for managing a farm, and improving land? Consider the great difficulties that have been surmounted (if they *have been* surmounted) in bringing this College to a bearing. Indeed it has not yet come the length of the infant described by the good Doctor. I find that much of the good opinion conceived of you in that quarter rests upon Mr. B.'s evidence; and how do you know but that, like Dr. —. you might not bring the same character back with you to Scotland, that you carried with you to America? It is a business of importance, which, like matrimony, ought to be well weighed, as it cannot ever be undone with honour. Remember that I write to you in confidence, never to be read but by yourself. But your situation craves the attention and the interference of your friends. I wish I was a fitter one to advise. Indeed it is presuming too far to say as much I have done: but the dread of your being decoyed away from your country and friends, where you and other good people are as much needed as you can be any where, makes me think it necessary to give only this hint, to take good heed, and ponder well the path of duty. No doubt you have done this: but oh! it is sometimes hard to know; and it is a great mercy when the Lord sets a plain path before us. You seem to make little account of the removal of an "obscure individual:" but this you would not do, if that individual was not yourself.

We should not, I believe, so much consider *whom* the Lord will or can raise up, as to work the work given *us* to do. I tremble while I mention this, and am ready to blot it out, when I compare myself with the person to whom I write. But as there are very few to do the Lord's work among us, an obscure individual is of great importance. We see what great things have been sometimes done by an individual. I dare say, it will ever be your 'chief end to glorify God,' wherever or in whatever work he may be pleased to employ you; but surely you need not leave this country to seek opportunities of greater usefulness: and you say yourself, that we should bless God that 'we are not persecuted for the faith, nor obliged to fly to a different country for safety'—'that we should be thankful for the tranquility of our station, and labour to improve it to the honour of the Giver of all good.' I should think the call to such a sort of vigorous duty, was more the province of pious young men, than one come to your time of life, with such indifferent health as yours."

"I took a spare half hour to scribble this, at two different times. Since it was begun, it has pleased God to call away from us our dear little lamb. I can only add, that many merciful circumstances might be mentioned. Oh that I could be watchful in searching out the innumerable instances of that love that never faileth. Alas, it is little of it we know. I, in particular, inexcusably neglect to observe and improve the operations of his hands, who is ever employed in doing what is good and best for us. I am sure you would be pleased to see my dear Mary's behaviour upon this occasion; who, though one of

the most affectionate, attentive mothers, who devotes her whole time to her children, is, nevertheless, as composed and resigned as you ever saw a person. What a mercy! We have been truly much afflicted, and no wonder upon this occasion. May the Lord sanctify the dispensation, and unite our hearts more closely to himself, and be weaning them more and more from the love of the creature! Pray for us, dear sir, and believe me, with much esteem, &c."

"Your sincere well wisher,"

"W. LEVEN."

"*Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

From the same.

"*Melville House, Nov. 20th*, 1784."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"I received your long letter, and do really regret the trouble you take in writing to me as one of your advisers, which I have told you I never would pretend to be; though I felt an irresistible desire to offer some thoughts that occurred to my weak judgment, perhaps ill supported by sense or argument, and also too partial to be sustained as of much weight. I see the wise and good often so different in their judgment in matters of importance, that they think it their duty to argue and act in opposition to their own inclination, from a dread that a bias that way may lead them to measures contrary to the will and providence of God. But to such tender consciences, does not God, in mercy, ordinarily make the way clear, and scatter the clouds which darken their minds? Too much consulting with flesh and blood, is not the way to come to the knowledge of the truth—(but I need

not tell you this.) Those who advise to the side that nature leads to, are suspected of partiality; while some who put nature out of the scale for others, would find it a more weighty matter were they balancing for themselves. I think the Lord in mercy often forms our natural tempers according to the work to be done. You are not endowed with a hardy spirit. You do not seem form formed for enterprise in the bustle of public life. Perhaps you may step out of your proper sphere of action, in contradiction to your own inclination, from a dread of sinful indulgence. Surely, there are many arguments on the *staying* side very weighty, as well as upon the side of *removing*, had I the pen of a Rush to illustrate them. I do not think *his* fixing on you, at the distance of twenty years, at all surprising. It is a question if he had heard much concerning people in your line during that time; and scarcely of any one whose character he could depend upon as friendly to America. So that he had, perhaps, no choice; unless, upon your refusal, he had made inquiry, and consulted with you and others for a suitable one, who had less (in the Providence of God), to detain him on this side of the Atlantic than you have. I hope this is no improper parenthesis. Are not your long settlement in a charge;—your age;—your wife and family;—your happy connections;—all *detaining* arguments of some weight? The present call from abroad certainly appears far from clear; and is at best but an *indigested* scheme, of the maturity of which one may lawfully entertain great doubts, considering the contentions which at present appear to exist among them. Your ideas of

the other side of the water, present, I am afraid, too flattering a picture. What good reason is there to believe that they are a sheet of clean paper, as you seem to think they are? 'Every thing,' you say, 'is to form; the minds of men there are free from the shackles of authority; and can more easily yield to reason, &c. &c.' I wish I could perceive good reason to see with your eyes, the people there in such a favourable light. But though I have ever been partial to them, and have fought many *small* battles for them, I cannot but believe that they are like ourselves,—much improved in the knowledge and practice of *evil.* We read of contentions and animosities begun and carrying on with a high hand; and while there are *so many masters,* I fear there will be constant division among them."

"I thought I had put a *finis* to this subject when I wrote to you at the end of the last month—but one word brings on another; and it is said of our sex that we like to have the last. But this is not the case with me; for I like to have you in my debt, which is the reason I am swift to reply. This is little for your ease, but I can wait your time till the convenient season arrives, and till you get answers to some important queries you expected to have solved before you formed any determination. I am always angry at myself for saying too much upon a subject on which I have so little title to advise; and yet always fall into the same error, though ready to confess myself the most unfit of all your correspodents to be of any use to you either by prayer or counsel, though I honestly wish it was otherwise."

"I told Mr. T. of your difficulties, and, as impar-

tially as I could, your reasons for and against removing. He seems to think that the state of affairs there, and more especially that of the College, is very precarious; and that it ought to be further advanced, and the state of affairs more settled, before it would be prudent to engage, or for any to leave his country, where he is of great use, which he is *certain* is the case with *you*, and a very wise sagacious man he appears to be."

"The parish of M——— are exeeedingly happy in having obtained Mr. T. for their minister; and likewise rejoice that my Lord was victorious over all the means that could possibly be used to defeat the settlement. But this must be the business of conversation, not of correspondence. About two hundred of them came here on Sabbath to hear him, in a pour of a rain and high wind, and said they were well requited for their trouble. An elder said that 'had Lord Leven given the parish three thousand guineas, he would not have made them so happy. Adieu! It is not from having much time to spare that I write you such a long letter, but for the esteem with which I am,"

"Your sincere well wisher,"

"W. Leven."

"*Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

"P. S. When an opportunity offers we shall be very glad to see you. Lord B. leaves us before or about Christmas. I wish you could have seen them. Lord B. would like to hear all your ideas concerning many things. I do not rightly understand what

you say concerning the East India Company, and the forfeited estates."

The writer of the foregoing letters would have been a *noble* woman without her title. The union of so much piety, wisdom, unobtrusive delicacy, and yet faithfulness of friendship, are rarely found united in epistles not intended for the public eye, but as a confidential testimonial of respect and Christian affection.

The reader will be very much struck with the contrast between the prudence, the caution, and the discerning hesitation of Lady Leven, and the sanguine calculations, the unlimited confidence, and the unqualified promises of Dr. Rush. He thus writes to Dr. Nisbet.

"*Philadelphia, May* 15*th*, 1784."

"*Dear Sir.*"

"I did myself the honor of writing a long letter to you last month, in which I endeavoured to state your appointment to be Principal of Dickinson College, in Cumberland County, in such terms as to induce you to accept of it. I informed you of the great opportunities of usefulness which were before you, and of the happiness you might enjoy in your new and elevated station. I have now only to add, that the public mind is more filled than ever with expectations from your character. They destine our College to be THE FIRST IN AMERICA, under your direction and government. The Ministers who compose the Synod of New York and Philadelphia begin to feel themselves interested in your arrival. They ex-

pect, in proportion to your superior knowledge and abilities, that you will bear a superior share of the labour in the harvest fields of the church in America."

"Mr. Bowie tells me that you have a dislike to the sea. I am not in the least jealous of that element. It cannot —it must not separate you from us. Your benevolence and sense of duty, I am sure, will overcome every fear, and even antipathy itself. Remember the words of the Saviour—"*It is I*"—"I, who "govern both winds and waves. I, who have quali- "fied you with so many gifts and graces for the sta- "tion to which you are called. I, who by my Pro- "vidence have made your name known and dear to "the people of America. I, who have many people "in that country, to be enlightened and instructed, "directly or indirectly, by you. I, who preside over "the whole vineyard of my Church, and, therefore, "know best in what part of it to place the most skil- "ful workmen. It is I, who call you to quit your "native country—and to spend the remainder of "your days in that new world in which the triumphs "of the Gospel shall ere long be no less remarkable "than the triumphs of liberty. I have now done "with ministers of my Providence. Washington, "and the Adams' have finished their work. Here- "after I shall operate on the American States chiefly "by the ministers of my grace."

"I neglected to inform you in my last letter of the seal of your College. The device consists of a Bible, a Telescope, and a Cap of Liberty—the two last placed over the first. The motto is *Pietate et Doctrina tuta libertas.* This excellent sentiment was

suggested by our worthy Governor, Mr. Dickinson, a gentleman who unites with the finest accomplishments of the man, and the patriot, a sacred regard to the doctrines and precepts of Christianity. You will receive with this letter a duplicate of his letter of invitation, together with a copy of the minutes of your election, and No. 3 of a bill of Exchange."

"We expect to see you this fall. I beg, upon your arrival in our river, near our city, that you would convey notice of it to me. My carriage shall be ready at a moment's warning to conduct Mrs. Nisbet to my house; where I shall insist upon you and your whole family making your home till you set out for Carlisle."

"Adieu—yours—yours, sincerely,

"B. Rush."

"*The Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet, Montrose.*"

From the Same.

"*Philadelphia, June* 1st. 1784."

"*Dear Sir.*"

"A vessel that sails in a few hours gives me an opportunity of acknowledging the recept of your polite and interesting letter of the 5th of February last, by the English Packet, which came to hand this day. My letter by Captain T. of the 22d of April, will give you, I hope, the satisfaction you have required upon the subject of the College at Carlisle. Our prospects with respect to that Institution brighten daily. Our funds amount to near three thousand pounds; and as to buildings, we expect to purchase some public works built with brick, within half a mile of Carlisle, during the late war. They are large and com-

modious, and may be had at a small expense from the United States. Our Legislature has patronized the new College, insomuch that we expect an endowment from them, at their next session, of five hundred pounds a year. From the plans which have been adopted for obtaining funds for our College, we have little doubt but what we shall have *ten thousand pounds* in the course of a year or two, from public and private donations. Indeed, sir, every finger of the hand of heaven has been visible in our behalf. Our enemies have not only become our friends; but have *contributed* largely to our design. Dickinson College, with Dr. Nisbet at its head, bids fair for being the first literary institution in America."

"I am happy to find that you feel such an attachment to your profession as a minister of the gospel. You will have an opportunity of preaching every Sunday at Carlisle. It will be *expected*—nay more—it will be *required* of you for the benefit of your pupils. The pastoral charge of the Congregation of Carlisle will be given to the Rev. Dr. Davidson, who will fill a subordinate Professor's chair in the College. As the bounds of the Congregation extend four or five miles from Carlisle, most of his time will be taken up in visiting his people. His name will be of use to us, for he is a man of learning, and of an excellent private character. If your preaching should prove acceptable at Carlisle, (which I am persuaded will be the case, for you and the Presbyterian congregation there hold exactly the same principles), I am well assured that you will receive fifty pounds a year from them, in addition to your salary from the College. The duties of your exalted station, in teach-

ing—governing—seeing company—corresponding—and attending Presbyteries, Synods, &c. will be such that you will be glad to be excused from performing any other of what are commonly called pastoral duties, than *preaching*."

"Calvinism, among Protestants of all denominations, is the fashionable religion of our country. Mr. *Haslet* (a disciple of Dr. *Priestley's*), has attempted to introduce Socinianism among us. But he met with so little encouragement, that he is obliged to betake himself to teaching in order to gain bread for his family. He preached *once* in *your* church in Carlisle, when his principles were detected, and exposed with all the zeal of orthodox indignation."

"I shall communicate your hints respecting providing for emigrants from the North of Scotland to some of our enterprising merchants."

"The letter which you will receive from Mr. *Cooper* and Mr. *Linn* will, I hope, be acceptable to you. The former is a learned and respectable divine; the latter is an elegant scholar, and a very popular and eloquent preacher. They are both men of great prudence and piety."

"Adieu, yours—yours,"

"Benjamin Rush."

"*To the Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

From the same.

"*Philadelphia, Nov.* 28, 1784."

"*My Dear Friend,*"

"I am afraid I shall oppress you with the number and postage of my letters; but I cannot omit an opportunity which offers to-morrow, by the way of

London, of informing you, that I have written three letters to you within these three weeks, in each of which I have given you such assurances of the safety and flourishing state of our College, as will determine you to embark in the spring for Pennsylvania. Mr. Dickinson seems very sensible of the prematurity of his fears communicated to you by the November Packet. You will receive with my letters a letter from him, in which he acknowledges a change in his opinions and prospects. If our river should not freeze before Christmas, you will receive a letter from the Trustees in the neighborhood of Carlisle. But if the obstructions in our navigation should check any future opportunities of writing to you, you may presume as much upon their honour and friendship as if you had received bonds from each of them. Not only honour and friendship, but interest, patriotism and religion are all concerned in your support."

"I find, by your papers, that your ministry propagate as many falsehoods about us *now* as they did during the war, when it was more difficult than at present to contradict them. The factions, riots, and executions in London, and the bankruptcies, clamours and distresses of every part of England and Scotland, afford a most striking contrast to the order, industry, and contentment which prevail in every part of this country. After the disbanding of an army of 10,000 men, it was expected that the strength of our government would have been tried. But we have happily been mistaken. Not a single instance has occurred of a soldier having broken the peace in any one of the states. All the crimes that have been committed since the war, have been by deserters from the

British army, and emigrants from Britain and Ireland. And indeed even these have been comparatively few. The means of subsistence here are so easy, and the profits of honest labour so great, that rogues find it less difficult to live by work than by plunder. You are at liberty, if you please, to make this information public through the channel of your newspapers."

"We have allotted a room in our house for your reception, which goes by the name of "Dr. Nisbet's room." My little folks often mention your name, especially my *boys*, who have been taught to consider you as their future master. Possibly this will be the last letter you will receive from me on the other side of the Atlantic. To the direction and protection of Heaven I commit you, till I take you by the hand on the peaceful shores of Pennsylvania. Adieu! Adieu!"

"Yours," "BENJAMIN RUSH."

"*The Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet,*
at Montrose, Scotland."

In other letters, written about the same time, Dr. Rush represents the prospects of the rise and firm establishment of the College as unquestionable and brilliant; assures Dr. Nisbet that its funds were such as might be firmly relied on; that his ample support as President rested upon a solid basis which could not possibly fail; that the Board of Trustees embraced a large number of men of wealth, several of them of very great wealth—every one of whom would consider his estate and his honour pledged to see that their newly elected President should not have a

want as long as he lived; and that the most gratifying amount both of usefulness and honour awaited him on his arrival in America, and entering on his new charge.

So far as the College and its endowments were concerned, these promises, as we shall see in the sequel, were not realized, though honestly intended, and ought never, in this alluring form, to have been made. There was, indeed, a moral impossibility, that in the then existing state of the country, immature in all literary matters at least, and just emerging from the exhaustion of the severe revolutionary contest, expectations thus excited should have been satisfactorily answered. The truth is, Dr. Rush was an ardent and sanguine man. His whole soul was embarked in the cause of the College at Carlisle. His patriotism, and his zeal for the advancement of literature were unfeigned and great; but in his plans in relation to the College—for he might be said to have been, in the outset, the master spirit of the whole scheme—there was, as we have seen, a large admixture of the stimulus of personal and party feeling. Without this, the enterprise would scarcely have been undertaken, at the time, and by the men who urged it on: and when this stimulus ceased to operate as powerfully as at first, the College, and its learned and venerable Head, engaged less of the attention of its original friends than they did in the beginning. New difficulties arose; their primitive zeal had cooled; and their early pledges were in a great measure forgotten.

Dr. Nisbet, indeed, was not without some intimations unfavourable to his acceptance of the American call from gentlemen on this side of the Atlantic.

Governor Dickinson himself, at one time, was discouraged by the aspect of things, and felt bound to express doubts whether the Doctor ought, in existing circumstances, to take a step so momentous to himself. After the receipt of such a communication from such a source, he seems, for a time, to have abandoned all thoughts of coming to America. It was in this state of mind that he addressed the followidg letter to his old and firm friend, the Earl of Buchan:

"*Montrose, 5th Jan.* 1785."

"*My Lord,*"

"As your Lordship has been so good as to take an interest in my affairs, I think it my duty to inform you of a material alteration in them that has lately taken place. I received lately a letter from Governor Dickinson, informing me that, by the new elections on the 12th October, a great change in the political affairs of that state has taken place; so that he thought himself obliged, in honour and justice, to request me not to think of coming out to America in its present divided state. Since the re-admission of the loyalists the majority is against my friends, and what is wonderful, they exclude Quakers, though near half the state, from the privilege of citizens, giving as a reason for it, their attachment to the government of Great Britain, and they have now voted out that majority which voted them in. Perhaps this delusion may not continue. I imagined that a coalition of parties was in view, as I received in August last, a very polite and friendly letter from General Reed, the head of the now prevailing party,

expressing his great satisfaction at the news of my going to America, and begging me to number him among my friends. But the admission of the loyalists has put that matter out of sight. Perhaps the late Assembly of Pennsylvania have been too much in haste to obtain the reputation of being humane and merciful, by taking in those who have turned out themselves. If they had contented themselves with restoring the loyalists to their estates, but denied them the privilege of voting, till they had passed a novitiate of ten or twelve years, the present confusion might have been avoided. The loyalists could have had no exception at being put in the same state in which the Quakers, a more numerous and respectable body, have remained for eight years past. But imprudent counsels are common in all states. Wishing your Lordship and Lady Buchan many happy years, I am, with great esteem,"

"My Lord,"

"Your Lordship's most obedient,"

"Humble servant,"

"CHARLES NISBET."

"*The Right Honourable, the*
Earl of Buchan, Edinburgh."

To this letter, Lord Buchan returned the following characteristic answer:

"*Reverend Sir,*"

"A mother whose constitution is broken, seldom produces healthy children."

"I am sorry to see the features of the mother grow every day stronger in North America; and I can hard-

ly condole with you upon your being obliged to live among your countrymen."

"I flatter myself that posterity will discover, that I have endeavoured, not altogether without success, to make Scotland more worthy of retaining you as a citizen, and a pastor of our Church, than it has been heretofore."

"That you should have been prevented from accepting your appointment in the proposed College at Carlisle, by the Calvinistic party in Pennsylvania, is amusing enough; as are the strange inconsistencies of admitting the loyalists to citizenship, and excluding the followers of the legislator or founder of the commonwealth."

"I have marked, with a jealous eye, your whole conduct; and I can find no fault with it, but that you are more honest and open than I am, and that your enemies have availed themselves of it."

"Since your train of thought has been led to the institution of youth, why are you to be prevented from the exercise of your talents and your laudable ambition *here*, because you are not allowed by prudence to white-wash the ill instituted youth of a distant country?"

"Only prove it is in your power that you can make a man, and you will have many at your command. In the mean time, allow me to call your attention to a learned subject, which I have been lately endeavouring to elucidate—*the progress of the Roman arms in your part of the world.*"

"There are the remains of two camps, about six miles from each other, connected with a causeway, and these are not far from you. They are called the

Haw-dykes and the *Battle-dykes.* Mr. Jamieson, of Forfar, has informed me of them, and I wish to have a description and measurement of them, accompanied by a drawing, and a map of the adjacent country, representing the nature of the ground independent of cultivation. From these, and a string of Roman entrenchments, through Strathmore to the pass of the Grampian, near Stonehive, I mean to follow Agricola in his march, and to determine the field of the last great battle where Galgacus, and the combined clans, were defeated."

"Lady Buchan desires me to present her compliments; and I am,"

"Rev'd sir, with great regard,"

"Your obedient humble servant,"

"BUCHAN."

"*To the Rev. Dr. Nisbet, Montrose.*"

The suggestion in Lord Buchan's letter, that Dr. Nisbet's election to the Presidency of Dickinson College was opposed by "the Calvinistic party of Pennsylvania" is as totally destitute of foundation as possible. Two classes of persons only, so far as is now known, opposed the measure, viz: 1st, the cautious and calculating, who were afraid of exciting expectations which could not be fulfilled, and who strongly doubted the propriety of bringing so distinguished and venerable a man from Great Britain to a situation less comfortable than that which he occupied in his native country; and, 2dly, the few who feared that the erection of a new College in Carlisle might interfere with the prosperity of institutions already existing, and with which they were con-

nected. But *Calvinism*, assuredly, formed no part of the dividing line in either case. Among all the opposers of both classes, only *one* nominal Calvinist is now recollected; whereas the great mass of Calvinistic influence in Pennsylvania was ultimately *in favour* of Dr. Nisbet's appointment.

In the mean while, some of the Trustees of the College, having heard of Mr. Dickinson's letter to Dr. Nisbet, and the unfavourable impression which it had made on his mind, although there could not be a formal meeting of the Board, determined to address to him a joint and countervailing communication. This was done in the following terms:

"*Philadelphia, Nov.* 16*th*, 1784."

"*Sir*,"

"Mr. Dickinson having communicated to us, the subscribers, Trustees of the College at Carlisle, occasionally met in Philadelphia, a copy of his letter to you of the 25th of October, we are happy in an opportunity of informing you that we conceive the apprehensions and fears contained in that letter to be wholly without foundation."

"We beg leave to inform you that the aforesaid letter was written by Mr. Dickinson in his private capacity, without the knowledge of any one of the Trustees, and that we are fully of the opinion that the charter of our College is as secure as any private property in the state."

"We expect to have the pleasure of seeing you in the spring, and to realize all our expectations of the future usefulness of our College, from your patronage as its Principal."

"In the mean while, we beg you would place the fullest confidence in the assurances and *obligations* of the Board of Trustees, contained in their public letter of the 30th of September last, which was signed by their order, by the President of our Board."

"With sincere wishes for your prosperous voyage to America, and assurances of future friendship, we are,"

"Sir,"

"With great respect,"

"Your obed't humble serv'ts,"

"JAMES EWING,
ROBT. M'PHERSON,
HENRY HILL,
BENJ'N RUSH,
Trustees of the College of Carlisle."

After much hesitation, and many conflicts, the importunity and solemn assurances of Dr. Rush, and other members of the Board of Trustees, prevailed. Dr. Nisbet declared his acceptance of the office to which he had been elected, and, in a short time, prepared for his voyage to America.

In taking leave of the Presbytery of Brechin, of which he had been, for many years, a member, the following testimonial was given him by that body; which, as it is much more extended than is commonly given on such occasions, and especially as it was voted by a body in which he had long been, and continued to be, in a struggling and persevering minority, a minority to many of the important and controuling members of the church of Scotland in no small degree offensive, is the more worthy of regard. Such a testimonial, in such circumstances

could not have been accorded except to a man whose talents, learning, and acknowledged piety, were so pre-eminent as to triumph even over party animosity.

"At Brechin, the 6th day of April, 1785, the Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet, who has been minister of Montrose, within the bounds of this Presbytery, since the 17th day of May, 1764, having signified to us his intention of removing from his present charge to a settlement in a distant part of the world, We hereby certify, that the said Dr. Nisbet, has, during the time of his residence within our bounds, discharged the several duties of the pastoral office, with great faithfulness, diligence, and assiduity; and that his conduct, both in private and in public life, has been in every respect unexceptionable, and highly ornamental to his character and profession, as a Christian, and a minister of the Gospel. We deplore his removal, as depriving this Presbytery of a worthy and valuable member; as a loss to the town and parish of Montrose in particular, and to the Church of Scotland in general; and we are fully confident, from our own knowledge and experience, that he will prove a real blessing to any Christian society in any part of the world, with which he may happen to be connected, and in any station or department in which Providence may place him. Signed in the name, in the presence, and by the appointment of the Presbytery of Brechin, at Brechin, place and date as above, by" "Robert Hannah, *Moderator*."

"John Pirie, *Clerk*.

But before Dr. Nisbet left Scotland, his faithful

and anxious friend, Lady Leven, addressed to him the following letters:

"*Melville House, Jan.*. 17, 1785."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"I intended to have written to you before now, had not the high postage laid an embargo. Mr. Martin has been so good as to give me a reading of your letter to him, which is the cause of my taking the pen immediately; in case I should by mistake, be classed among your "mistaken Right Honourable friends;" that I may assure you, that whoever these may be, I never was among the number; but had penetration enough, upon the first reading, to discover the true import of the words. And I really think it required but a small degree of penetration to pass a true judgment upon them by any person who knows the author's manner and feelings. I thought the words alluded to could never have been construed in any light but in jest, though the writer had been unknown; but surely none that know the humanity of your disposition, and your sympathy with all in distress, could suppose you guilty of hard measures. I think it was not prudent to write in that style to such a distance. The other particulars of your letter to Mr. W. I remember little about; the note about the Loyalists being the only thing I had taken notice of, and on which I was at a loss for a commentary. I hope you keep good health in this severe season. Both my Lord and I have been ailing. He has shared in a distemper very epidemic of late in many places, a complaint in the bowels, attended with a flux. He is now pretty well again. A great mercy

—among many mercies to his family, that cannot be numbered."

"We have no word yet of the ship in which our son David sailed for Gibraltar the end of November last, which is matter of great anxiety to my mind. Dr. Erskine's only remaining son has been very ill, and is still far from well. They dreaded water in his head. The worthy man is very low."

"I only got your letter yesterday from Mr. M. He only got it himself on Saturday, as he had been in Edinburgh. I should not write so soon, but did not wish that you should suppose me so ignorant of your Christian disposition as to misconstrue your words when they would bear a meaning that implied no evil."

"In haste, adieu. I take the opportunity of our carrier to send this to Edinburgh. I am, Reverend and dear sir,

"Yours, with great regard,"

"W. LEVEN."

"*The Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet,*"

"*Montrose.*"

From the same.

"*Melville House, March* 23, 1785."

"*Rev. and worthy Sir.*"

"It was lucky for me that your final departure was sudden and unexpected the day you left Melville House. I had no apprehension that it was to be the last meeting. It is always very hard upon me to bid adieu to a friend, much more especially when I never expect to see him again. You have by this time, no doubt, felt enough of this trial, which to me is al-

ways affecting. I intended writing to you before now, but waited for some convenient opportunity. But upon hearing accidentally that you was to be at Dundee on Wednesday, on your way to Greenock, I take up the pen to express my good wishes for a safe and easy passage, and that you may be long preserved for valuable purposes. I heartily sympathize with Mrs. Nisbet. If her views are not clear as to the path of duty, she must suffer deeply. I beg that you will write to me sometimes. And do not *conceal* the truth, if matters do not answer your expectations. I still think you have been hurried off this stage, which I do most sincerely regret. My worthy friend, Dr. Rush and I would be *antipodes* in your affairs. I beg, however, that you will assure him of my constant love and regard, for the friendly duty he performed, to the last remains of HIM, whom I loved as my own life.* I have half written several

* The repeated and strong expressions of grateful attachment to Dr. Rush, on the part of the Countess of Leven and her family cannot have escaped the notice of any attentive reader. It is due to the memory of both parties to assign the reasons of this attachment. When Dr. Rush was pursuing his medical studies in the University of Edinburgh, he became particularly acquainted with the Earl of Leven's family, and was a frequent visitor at Melville House. Nor will any one who ever had an opportunity of observing the refined and polished manners, and the peculiarly fascinating conversational powers with which he was endowed, wonder that, when he returned to America, he left behind him in such a family, not only a respectful, but even an affectionate memorial. But there was another tie still more tender and deeply interesting which bound him to that noble family.

In the British army sent over for the subjugation of the Colonies, the Earl of Leven had a son—the honorable Captain William Leslie, of the 17th Regiment, who is said to have been an elegant and promising young man. In the battle of Princeton, January 3d, 1777,

letters to him, and write him many in my thoughts; but never could get one completed that pleased me. My Lord has written to the Doctor three or four times, both before and since hostilities closed. I hope he has received some of them. I would not for any thing have him suspect any diminution of the grateful sense which all this family will ever retain of the regard due to one who showed himself to be *such a friend in a far country.* It gives me great pleasure to learn, from time to time, that he is so happy in his domestic concerns. I have desired my daughter to put into your keeping a small box directed to Dr. Rush, which you will be so good as to take care of and deliver to him."

this young officer was among the slain. After the retreat of the British, leaving a number of their killed and wounded on the field, General Washington, accompanied by Doctor Rush—then Physician General of the American army—and several other gentlemen, rode up to that part of the ground on which the greatest number of the killed and wounded were lying, and made some inquiry concerning the regiments which had been engaged, and especially respecting the body of an officer immediately in view, which attracted his particular attention. It was answered, that that was the body of the honourable Captain Leslie, of the 17th Regiment. Upon hearing this, Dr. Rush was much affected; immediately dismounted; with the aid of a servant, laid the body on a suitable vehicle, which happened to be near at hand; took it with him when the American army withdrew from Princeton; and when they halted at Pluckamin, a small village, a little more than twenty miles north of Princeton, caused the interesting remains of his friend's son to be interred with appropriate honours and solemnity. This distinguished respect and sympathy on the part of an old acquaintance—now a magnanimous foe—made, as it well might—a deep impression on the minds of the Earl of Leven's family. That it should never be effaced from a mother's heart, every one acquainted with maternal feelings would, of course, expect.

"I write this in a hurry, having no time to lose. I shall wish you and your family well, in all places, and at all times; being, with much esteem and regret, your humble servant,"

"W. LEVEN."

"*The Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet.*"

After perusing such letters as these, it is probable that every reader will feel more and more surprise, that Dr. Nisbet, after having lived nearly half a century in Scotland, and after having long enjoyed the intercourse and affectionate confidence of *such* friends, should consent to tear himself away from their society, and from all the attractions connected with it, and to launch, after having passed the meridian of life, into new scenes; among entirely new connections; and on a theatre of action as arduous as it was untried and responsible.

Nor did Dr. Rush's generous conduct end here. Knowing that the location of the remains of a stranger, deposited in an obscure village church yard, might soon pass from the memory of those who felt little interest in the deceased, he caused a handsome marble monument to be erected over the grave, bearing the following inscription:—

"In memory of
The Honourable Captain William Leslie,
Of the 17th British Regiment,
Son of the Earl of Leven,
In Scotland.
He fell January 3d, 1777, aged 26 years,
At the battle of Princeton.
His friend, Benjamin Rush, M. D.
Of Philadelphia,
Hath caused this stone to be erected,
As a mark of his esteem for his worth,
And of his respect for
His noble Family."

Yet when we consider the pictures of certain and great usefulness which were held up to his view; the prospect of being able to raise the standard of knowledge and intellectual improvement in the new world; and the solemn, reiterated pledges of ample and even generous support to the end of life, given by men of so much elevation in society, we shall easily be able to understand how his difficulties were overcome, and he constrained to commit his future comfort to the new enterprise.

Dr. Nisbet sailed from Greenock, with his family, on the 23d day of April, 1785, and after a voyage of what was then deemed a medium length, and marked by no very unusual circumstances, landed at Philadelphia on the 9th day of June following. He was now in the fiftieth year of his age. He had lost by death four children,—two sons and two daughters in Scotland. The family which he brought with him consisted of Mrs. Nisbet, together with two sons and two daughters. Thomas, the elder of the sons, had passed through a regular course of study, and been graduated in the University of Edinburgh, before he left Scotland. He was a young man of uncommonly fine talents, and of accurate and mature scholarship, and promised, at that time, to be an ornament and a blessing to his family.

Dr. Nisbet remained with his family in Philadelphia nearly three weeks after their arrival. During this time, according to a previous arrangement, the house of Dr. Rush was their home. Here they received all those kind and polite attentions from the family of their host, and from the citizens of Philadelphia, which strangers so interesting, and so high-

ly esteemed might have been expected to draw from an intelligent and polished community.

During this interval he paid a short visit to his old friend, Dr. Witherspoon, of Princeton, by whom he was cordially received, and introduced to the literary gentlemen connected with the College in that place.

In four or five days after his arrival in Philadelphia, he wrote thus to his friend, the Earl of Buchan:

"*Philadelphia, June 13th*, 1785."

"*My Lord,*"

"As your Lordship is kind enough to take an interest in my affairs, I give you the trouble of this to inform you, that after a pretty good passage of seven and forty days, I arrived here on Thursday last at three o'clock afternoon. We had several smart gales, and one calm with a high sea, near the banks of Newfoundland. I used the directions I got from your Lordship, having procured a bag of saffron at Greenock. I had no attack of the sea sickness all the passage, but my youngest boy had it severely for eight days, but is now well recovered. The spring has been rainy and backward in this country. The weather is only become fine and clear since our arrival. The heats however are not yet come on. I have been waited on since my coming here by many people of property and influence in this State, from whom I have received every mark of respect and attention, and the republicans here, I am assured, never deign to bestow these where they are not in earnest, as they have nothing to ask of any man living. I lodge with my family in Dr. Rush's house

where we are entertained with a hospitality that would do honour to any age or country. I have been visited by sundry ministers of the English, German and Scotch churches, who have cordially welcomed me to this country. Party spirit is beginning to subside, and commerce appears to flourish, from the vast number of ships of all nations with which the river is lined for a mile and an half opposite this city. Every thing seems quiet and orderly, and those in office are respected by all parties. A Spanish frigate brought over an Ambassador from his Catholic Majesty to the United States. England, who will send none, has fairly outdone the Spaniards in haughtiness. The people here bear no grudge at Great Britain, and continue to prefer her manufactures. I am assured that British debts are recovered every day in the courts of this State, whatever is said on your side the Atlantic. Dr. Rush has written an Essay on the progress of Agriculture and Population in Pennsylvania for the information of a friend in London. I have begged a copy to enclose for your Lordship, with which I hope you will not be displeased. As Agriculture and Commerce are the chief objects here, there cannot be much literature, though I am assured there are more than could have been expected, who possess no small degree of learning. There is a Philosophical Society in this city, which has subsisted for some time, and has already published a volume of their transactions. They are just now getting a hall built for their meetings, the Assembly having given them the ground for that purpose. Perhaps it is possible to make the sciences flourish without royal patronage. The like societies

exist, as I am informed, in the Northern States, and are rising to reputation. If this country continues in peace for a considerable time, as I hope it will, learning and good taste may be diffused among its citizens to a much greater degree than at present, as they are still far from having acquired that portion of wealth which enervates the mind, and renders it incapable of exertion. I should imagine likewise that the general sobriety that prevails here, must be favourable to regular thinking and distinct perception. The West Indians, and the inhabitants of the Southern States, on account of their dissipation and intemperance, cannot be expected to figure in science, or even to live so long as to be able to acquire it. The mania of purchasing vast quantities of land prevails not a little among the people of property in this country. Many are distressed, and unable to pay their debts, merely on account of their extensive purchases. The mania of possessing land after the price is spent, is the nearest thing you have to it in Great Britain. The greatest inconvenience of this country at present is the suspension of private credit, which keeps much money out of circulation, and the want of exports to answer their imports. Luxury in dress and furniture prevails more than excess in eating and drinking. Frugality and moderation is rendered more difficult by the vast importations of European goods. The intercourse with the Spanish settlements is perhaps the most profitable branch of trade possessed by these States. It is much to be wished that they may cultivate the friendship of that Court. But this may be rendered difficult by the high spirit and thoughtlessness of our back settlers. In regard

to my own affairs, my prospects are more encouraging than I expected. I mean to leave this city next week, as some gentlemen of Carlisle are expected to convey me thither. No regulations are yet established, and the whole will be left to my discretion. I have not been at Princeton, and perhaps may not have it in my power to get there till September next. If your Lordship desires any information from this country which I can furnish, I shall be proud to receive your commands. I beg my sincere respects to Lady Buchan, and remain,"

"My Lord,"

"Your Lordship's most obedient,"

"Humble servant,"

"CHARLES NISBET."

"*The Right Honourable, the*
Earl of Buchan, Edinburgh."

CHAPTER V.

His Residence in the United States.

Early in July, 1785, Doctor Nisbet set out from Philadelphia, for Carlisle, and reached it on the *fourth* of that month, in the midst of the spirited and patriotic celebration of the Anniversary of Independence. The inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, who had assembled in great numbers to commemorate the day, being informed of his approach, dispatched a deputation of the citizens, together with the Carlisle troop of horse, to escort him into the borough. He entered it in the midst of joy and congratulation, and was received and treated with all those marks of respect and esteem which distinguished and long expected strangers, having so many strong claims on the public favour, had a right to anticipate. On the next day, the 5th of July, the oath of office was administered to the Doctor; and he immediately began to address himself to those duties which devolved on the Head of an infant Institution, existing, as yet, chiefly on paper; whose students were to be attracted; whose character was to be formed; and whose success, under God, was to be insured only by the wisdom and reputation of a distinguished individual called to preside over it.

It was on this occasion, that Dr. Nisbet delivered the only discourse that he ever allowed to be printed. It was founded on *Acts* vii. 22: "*And Moses was*

learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words, and in deeds." The scope of the sermon was to show "the importance of the union of piety and learning." It is hardly necessary to say that the sermon was an able one, and that those who have read it, have been disposed instinctively to regret that the author should not have published much more.

Scarcely had he entered on the arduous duties of this new and responsible office, before he and several members of his family, were attacked with a severe and protracted illness. Although Carlisle and its neighbourhood have, in general, been and still are considered as rather remarkably healthy; yet these interesting strangers underwent what has been called *a seasoning* to the climate, of the most dangerous and trying kind. Most of them were seized with an obstinate fever, which brought them very low, and from which their recovery was difficult and extremely slow. The Doctor himself suffered more severely than any other member of the family. His strength was so greatly reduced by the obstinate continuance of the disease, that he was confined in a great measure to his house for several months, and rendered wholly unfit for any effort, either bodily or mental; and so completely discouraged, that, on the 18th of October following his arrival, he sent in to the Board of Trustees of the College, his resignation of the office of President, and determined on returning to Scotland. The Board received this communication with great regret, and were unwilling to accept it. But finding the Doctor's mind filled with the most gloomy impressions concerning his pros-

pects, and in a state which precluded the hope of being able to retain him, they at length, with much reluctance, determined to yield to his desires, and accepted his resignation.

In this state of depression and despondency, he addressed the following letter to the Earl of Buchan:

"*Carlisle, 15th December*, 1785."

"*My Lord.*"

"I had the honour of your Lordship's esteemed letter of the 14th, Sept. eight days ago. It will no doubt surprise you to learn that I am preparing to leave this country by the first opportunity. I have not been in a condition to enjoy life, or do business since I entered it. The great heats, though last summer was one of the mildest ever known here, are beyond the conception of any person who has not felt them. Fevers and agues are the reigning distresses, to some they are annual and periodical, and in all cases most violent and oppressive to the nervous system. I run a great risk of falling a sacrifice to the climate. My whole family were ill for three months together, and I have heard of their lasting five years. Immoderate heat extinguishes activity, and damps the spirit of enterprise in persons of my weak nervous constitution. I can give no other reason for the universal gravity that reigns among the people of this country, but that their nerves are quite relaxed. They would answer Lord Chesterfield's taste to a tittle."

"America will doubtless be a great and flourishing empire, but it must undergo a great change before it becomes so. They must have more virtue, more in-

dustry, and more confidence in one another than at present. What looks most ominous for the rising generation is the extravagant indulgence that is shown to children. They must have the choice of their masters, and may go to school or not as they please. The whip is reserved for negroes. Yet the Roman ferula, of the very shape in which it is represented in the statue of the Schoolmaster at Lyons, is used in schools here, and often is not idle."

Those who have not been in Europe, who are the majority, and consequently the rulers, have no notion of any difference betwixt a college and a school for boys and girls of six years of age. They would have their teachers be mere day-labourers for seven hours a day, for summer and winter, and allow only two months a year for vacation. For which reason the lessons they receive are crude and indigested. Private study is impractible, no time being left for it, and the students acquire only a confused and imperfect idea of what they think they have learned, not to mention that many contract a decided aversion for books and learning, in consequence of the great confinement and little satisfaction they experience at their colleges."

"Parents would have their children become learned, but the way in which they are to attain it must be dictated by those who know nothing of the matter. The power of the Trustees is absolute, and without appeal. They receive the tuition money paid by the parents, and allow the teachers what salaries they please: they turn them off when they think proper, and they confer degrees *pleno jure*, the teachers

serving only as clerks for drawing up and signing the diplomas, the Trustees receiving the money that is paid for them. It is no wonder that they should be bestowed on subjects that disgrace them. Nor is the case altered though some of the Trustees should be persons of virtue and learning. They will oblige their friends, and take such measures as may render their college agreeble to the people, and draw students from a distance. What they consider as the ultimate end of learning, is that students may be able to speak readily in public; so that the preparing and delivering their speeches, make the greatest part of their employment."

"I know not when or whether these things will be altered, as the Americans seem much more desirous that their affairs be managed by themselves than that they should be well managed. Many Acadamies and Seminaries are erected or erecting in different States, but from the foolishness of their plan I suppose that learning will be long a stranger in this country. Their taste seems to be like that of the Romans, who made every thing subservient to oratory. They are strongly attached to liberty, and can make great exertions upon any sudden emergency, but are quite inattentive to futurity. The general *mania* of removing to the westward must be hurtful to the other parts of this State. I imagined that, as I was acceptable to all parties, I might cure them of their wrong notions of education and Colleges; but when I presented a few hints to the meeting of the Trustees, not the smallest attention was paid to them, though I know that many of them approved of them,

in their hearts. Every thing was ordered according to the old *mumpsimus*. Will your Lordship blame me for leaving this country? I beg my sincere respects to Lady Buchan. I am,"

"My Lord,"

"Your Lordship's most obedient"

"Humble servant,"

"CHARLES NISBET."

"*To the Right Honourable, the Earl of Buchan, Edinburgh.*"

An immediate return to Scotland, however, being impracticable, for want of strength and spirits, and of a good opportunity; and a voyage in mid-winter being both uncomfortable and unsafe, it became necessary to remain in Carlisle until the ensuing spring. But before the close of winter, both the Doctor himself and all the invalids of his family had so far recovered; and with the return of health, their spirits and comfortable feelings had so far rallied; that they began to admit the idea of remaining with health and usefulness in America. Under the influence of these altered feelings, he thus announced the change in his purpose, to his old friend, Lord Buchan.

"*Carlisle, 20th April*, 1786."

"*My Lord*,"

"I informed your Lordship, some month ago, of my resolution to leave this country, in which, indeed, I have met with many discouragements and disappointments; but as it pleased God to restore my

health in December last, and many people were still earnest for my staying, I intimated to the Trustees my willingness to resume my former office, to which I hope to be re-elected in May next. This country is in a torpid state with regard to public spirit, arts and industry, and far from being united in politics. Indeed, private interest seems every where to be pursued in preference to the public good. Some few are wise, but the far greater part otherwise. Their public debts, though easily payable by good management, bear hard upon them. Industry and manufactures, even with the thin population we have, might extricate us from our difficulties; but most people here think that what has not been done can never be done. The ruinous practice of moving to the westward still continues, both in this and sundry other States. Kentucky is daily growing at their expense, though I cannot see how a people that live a thousand miles from the sea can find any market for their produce, or subsist by themselves. On account of the scarcity of working people, agriculture is in a low state, and the want of proper exports is continually taking money out of this country, and running our merchants in debt to England more than they can pay. The easy and extensive credit granted by English merchants prevents people here from thinking of manufactures, but as a corn-trade is a very bad staple, our people cannot long make punctual remittances, and necessity and want of credit must at last drive them to do something for themselves. Some small beginnings of manufactures have taken place in the northern States, but there is no appearance of any such thing here. A love of letters and know-

ledge prevails among the youth; but the seminaries of this country are upon the worst footing, owing to their being too often under the government of ignorant Trustees."

"The national frugality and industry of the Germans render them the most thriving inhabitants of this State, but their ignorance and superstition are much against them. A deference to absurd customs, and an aversion to labour, prove a dead weight on all schemes of improvement. Hence the lands produce little; most of the ground is in wood or waste; the highways in a state of nature; and the inhabitants, by living so distant from each other, are deprived of the benefit of society, and especially of that emulation which is excited by neighbourhood. Indeed, societies for improvement of agriculture have been formed at Philadelphia and Baltimore; but their outset is very faint, and the people are not disposed to listen to them. The few rich men lay out all their money on land, which they keep up, in hopes of a high price; but personal credit does not exist, and no man chooses to trust another without a mortgage. I hear of no such thing as a man of fortune residing on his estate in the country, and setting an example of rational agriculture to his neighbours. Hence the meanness of the country houses, and the neglected and squalid state of farms. In the southern States, indeed, there are men of fortune, who occupy large territories, but they have no neighbours, and live on the labours of herds of slaves, without elegance, taste, or usefulness."

"If any thing worthy your Lordship's attention should come to my knowledge, I shall be ready to

communicate it. I beg my best respects to Lady Buchan, and remain, with esteem,"

"My Lord,"

"Your Lordship's most obedient"

"Humble servant,"

"CHARLES NISBET."

"*The Right Hon. the Earl of Buchan, Edinburgh.*"

Accordingly, on the 10th of the following May, 1786, he was unanimously re-elected to the office which he had relinquished, and immediately resumed the performance of its duties. Happily, in the good providence of God, the climate of Carlisle never afterwards subjected him to a similar trial. His health was never again, for any length of time, seriously interrupted, until the approach of that fatal illness which, many years afterward, terminated his life.

It was not, however, for a number of months after he went abroad, and began to resume the duties of his station, that he recovered his usual strength of body, and his wonted vigour and activity of mind. During the continuance of this impaired mental power, when his memory, which might be considered as one of his master faculties, did not serve him as promptly as usual, an intelligent gentleman informed the author of this Memoir, that he heard Dr. Nisbet preach. He remarked that his preaching was, so far as he could judge, as rich and instructive as usual; but not marked with so much vigour and sprightliness. But what struck him as evincing a slight failure of memory, and at the same time the

wonderful fertility of his mind was this. When he had gone through the expository and didactic part of his discourse, he distinctly announced his purpose to apply the subject, and made a practical application, in the usual form, and, in the estimation of the gentleman, in a very appropriate and happy manner. But, just as he had completed it, his recollection seemed, for a moment to fail him—and he said, a second time—"Let us now apply the subject." Upon which he commenced a new application, drawn out into a number of particulars—without repeating a single idea that he had already expressed, and yet all equally appropriate and happy with that which he had before delivered. Here appeared an anomaly of memory of a peculiar kind. It failed him as to the *fact*, that he had already applied his subject; but did *not* fail him with respect to the topics on which he had just enlarged, and which he had urged in making that application. His mind was so fertile and full that he evidently had the power, without previous preparation, to illustrate and apply the same subject in a variety of different ways, without interference or confusion. This failure of his memory, however, lasted only for a short time. The full exercise of that faculty, so peculiarly strong in him, was soon restored, and continued to serve him with its wonted promptness and vigour, until the approach of his last illness.

The Rev. Dr. John Erskine, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, was mentioned in the preceding chapter as one of Dr. Nisbet's early and affectionate friends. This excellent man, who seemed to take an interest in every thing benevolent or useful in every

part of the world, by no means ceased to care for his beloved brother after his removal to America. Hearing of his sickness, his discouragement, and his serious thoughts of abandoning the country, and returning to Scotland, he wrote to him in the most affectionate manner, and at the same time expressing with candour his opinion of the course which ought to be pursued. Among the letters written on this occasion, the following will serve to manifest the spirit and practical character of the venerable writer.

"*Edinburgh, July* 28, 1786."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"I wrote, and sent you a small parcel of books, for your College, to the care of Dr. Wistar, of Philadelphia, now in London, three days ago. The only intention of this is to give you the satisfaction of sending three letters, which will show you the deep affection for you, and concern for your interest felt by Dr. —— and Dr. ——. I beg that they may be burnt, that no person may know of the contents of them; particularly that the writers may have no hint of my having sent them to you. I have equal proofs of Sir Henry Moncrieff's, and of Mr. Henry Erskine's attention, though I do not send them. I am, however, of opinion that all your friends in Scotland, (except, perhaps, Lady Leven) think that, although there is room to doubt as to your first success in the Presidentship of Dickinson College; there is none that your staying in America will be more for your honour, your interest, and the general interests of religion, than your returning."

"Let me know what branches you teach in the

College, and what are taught by others, whether Professors or Tutors; and also what place in London proper for you, or for Dickinson College, should be left at."

"I am, my dear Sir,"

"Yours, affectionately,"

"JOHN ERSKINE."

"*To the Rev. Dr. Nisbet,*
President of Dickinson College, Carlisle."

From the Same.

"*Edinburgh, Sept. 29th,* 1786."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"Nothing important has occurred since my last letter of July 28th. I send this chiefly for the purpose of inclosing one to you from Lord Buchan."

"Holland seems on the eve of a civil war, in which some of our shallow, short-sighted politicians are rejoicing, on account of the temporary advantage to our commerce; not considering the increase of the power of France which must be produced by their ruin, and probably soon involve Britain in the same fate. But the popular voice will be—let the ungrateful Dutch fight their own battles—and the ministry will listen to it."

"As you are in a strange country, remember that you have two ears and but one tongue; and therefore, without necessity, and a thorough knowledge of the prudence as well as honesty of your correspondents, write nothing which you would be uneasy if it was published."

"I wish you would fix on places at London, Phi-

ladelphia, and New York, for sending parcels to your self or your College."

"I am, dear Sir,"

"Yours, affectionately,"

"JOHN ERSKINE."

"*To the Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet,*
President of Dickinson College, Carlisle."

Dr. Nisbet's faithful and enlightened friend, the Countess of Leven and Melville, whose anxious mind followed her venerable correspondent to America, about this time, having received from himself an account of his safe arrival, addressed to him the following letter.

"*Melville House, August* 8, 1785."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"I am much indebted to you for writing me so soon after your arrival, and acquainting me with your safe landing on the American shore. You give me a very distinct account of your voyage. Your son's dangerous illness would, of course, divert your fears for one week: though I dare say you had many awful alarms, and your poor wife would be in great distress. I do not know how it has been with you as to the article of heat; but we have seen no such warm summer for twenty or thirty years. There was also a great deal of thunder and lightning on Tuesday the 26th of last month, which seems to have been universal; at least, we have heard of its effects, east and west, south and north."

"I rejoice that you found the worthy Dr. Rush in comfortable circumstances. I shall never be indif-

ferent concerning him. He gained my good opinion in his early days, and has done much since to confirm it. I never think of him but with affection. My not writing to him is not a mark of my want of esteem; but that the subject which first presents itself to my mind, when I attempt to write to him, (which I have done often) is too tender. He has a feeling heart. I wish you had told me whether the box directed to him, which followed you to Glasgow, by Mr. Lake, arrived in safety. When you write, let me know about his family, &c. and also about your fellow voyager, Mr. Thompson; and whether he has got any thing in a settled way. Poor Mr. Peterkin has waited for some time for a ship; and, in the mean time, Mr. G. is dead, who was chaplain of Sterling Castle, and Mr. P. has applied for that small living. If he succeeds, it will prevent the necessity of leaving his poor family; who will be in a very poor way if he is obliged to leave them."

"Your Glasgow correspondents will write you all about a Jew who has been preaching there and in Edinburgh. I would gladly hope it is the beginning of a more plentiful harvest. He has published a short account of his conversion, which Mr. Peterkin will carry, if he goes. I intend to send this letter by him, which causes me to write in a hurry, as his motions are uncertain. It will soon be known if there is any hope of his success."

"I have the pleasure to inform you, that Lord Balgonie has a son. The mother is well, and making a fine nurse. We expect them (God willing) in about a fortnight. This is a very comfortable event. I hope you will not forget your friends in your pray-

ers, now that you are in a far country. No distance of place can remove us from HIM who is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and is not far from every one of us. O that I felt this truth in such a manner as to have its due influence upon all my thoughts, and words, and actions!"

"I have little new to write, for either *instruction* or *comfort*. What takes up the attention, and is the foundation of much speculation at present, is calculated for neither of these ends, viz: that Mr. M., of B. at the age of *above sixty*, has gone off with a lady between thirty and forty, and left his worthy wife to mourn for his absence and his sins. She is a very pious good woman, and at present will find abundant use for the exercise of all Christian graces. She will have the prayers of many good people in her singularly trying situation. He has £10,000 sterling a year, and left a letter for the minister of the parish, requesting him to take care and comfort Lady Catharine."

"For Church news, I leave it to all your brethren to communicate; and for State news, I do not allow myself to interfere with it. I shall be glad to find that Presbyterians with you stand their ground. I suppose, after you are settled, you will find time to write to old friends, and will sometimes find private hands coming in case you have any pamphlet or parcel. I think much of your writing to me so soon. My Lord joins, with all the family, in best respects to you. If Mr. Peterkin should go out, I hope you will show him some favour. I am persuaded that he is a very serious good man. This is all I can give you at present. We are all much as

you left us, which is a singular mercy. My best respects to Mrs. Nisbet. She has not yet forgotten Montrose. Believe me, with much esteem,"

"Your humble servant,"

"W. LEVEN."

"*The Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet.*"

The following letter, also from the same excellent lady, will show how strong the attachment of the Church at Montrose was to the venerable Pastor of whom they had been recently deprived, and with what cordiality they would have received him back, had he been willing to return. It appears from the statement of Lady Leven, that Dr. Nisbet's sickness soon after his arrival; his discouragement; his intention of leaving Carlisle, and returning to his native country—were all, to some extent, known in Scotland; and that his friends, in the spring of 1786, were every day looking for his return with the deepest interest, and were greatly disappointed at his determining to remain in America.

"*Melville House, Aug. 25th,* 1786."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"Just when I was meditating a letter to you, yours of June 24th, came to hand. Had I been in good health, I should not have been so long in acknowledging your letter *without date,* which I received about three or four weeks ago. It filled me with much surprise, considering its immediate predecessor, and that we had long looked for you, and daily expected your arrival on the Scotch coast. I had heard surmises, but none of them appeared such as

could be depended on, till I had it from your own hand. Most wishfully your friends were expecting you, and the people at Montrose kept the Church vacant till your *not* coming was almost certain. But perhaps you did not know of this. I trust that you have been directed to what is best, and most for promoting that interest which you wish to spread. I am sorry to find that your health has been again affected in the hot weather, and that your family are suffering by it. I shall be glad to learn that you are all better, and other particulars concerning them."

"I am much obliged to you for writing me so particularly concerning the state of religion. I fear you are prejudiced, and, therefore, do not do all the justice to the Methodists that many deserve who go under that designation. You know they were always in two parties. Those bearing the name of Mr. Whitefield are orthodox, as I suppose, in all points. And, although some of Mr. Wesley's are not so; yet I am persuaded they have done a great deal of good in reforming the lives and manners of thousands; and that Mr. Wesley has been countenanced in his indefatigable labours by his Divine Master. To Him, according to his views, he has been a faithful servant for 70 years. He is now near 90, still active and vigorous, and anxiously concerned, I truly believe, to do the will of his heavenly Father."

"I should be glad to learn more particulars concerning the '*Shakers*,' being entirely ignorant of their history or tenets. I will be much obliged to you for writing frequently. I am sure you will hear much good of Mr. Whitefield, and still find

some of his disciples making a good figure. It is always a pleasure to me to hear any thing to his praise. You will have heard, perhaps, before this reaches you, of the great loss which the Church and people of God have met with in the death of the precious Lady GLENORCHY. I fear we shall never see her like again. But the subject is too copious. I must only give you the text, which you can enlarge upon better than I. She left only the scrawl of an unsigned will, in which she devised £5000 to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in Scotland; and a like sum for pious uses in England. It is not ascertained whether or not Lady Southerland and her husband will fulfil her intentions; but I should suppose their doing so cannot be doubted. There is a good deal more devised for pious uses."

"As I suppose you get Scotch newspapers which go to Philadelphia, I need not write concerning current news. Many strange things daily fall out. We hear of much evil, and little good. May a happy reverse soon take place! Shall we ever see the unhappy division between America and her mother made up again? Shall we see that breach which was and is the cause of so many evils, repaired? I am persuaded that both parties would be happier and more affectionate than ever. Alas! pride, that easily besetting sin, stands in the breach, ever industrious to widen it. O that men were wise!"

"Let me know if it be true that Dr. Witherspoon has given up the Presidentship of Princeton College. I am glad to find that Mr. Thompson is alive and well. We had heard that he was dead. As I have an opportunity of sending this free and safely, I has-

ten to conclude. I hope our worthy friend, Dr. Rush, and family, continue well and happy. I had a kind letter from him lately, which gave me very great pleasure. Had I been well, I should have written an answer before now, and have sometimes been on the point of doing it, but have been prevented. My best respects and wishes ever attend him and all his concerns."

"All this family desire to be kindly remembered to you and the worthy Dr. Rush. I am ever, with esteem, dear sir,"

"Your humble servant,"

"W. LEVEN."

"*The Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet,*
Care of Dr. Rush, Philadelphia."

Dr. Nisbet, as soon as his health was established, not only entered on the duties of his office; but persued them to an extent, and with an alacrity and vigour which none but a man of his extraordinary resources, and great energy could have safely undertaken. He immediately began the preparation and delivery of *four co-ordinate courses of Lectures*—One on *Logic;* another on the *Philosophy of the Mind;* a third on *Moral Philosophy;* and a fourth, on *Belles Lettres*, including interesting views, historical and literary, of the principal classical writers, both Greek and Latin. These were all carried on at the same time, and with the greatest apparent ease; the lecture of each successive day being, for the most part, written, so far as it was committed to writing at all, on the preceding evening. But it was not necessary for *him* to write more than the leading outlines of a

Lecture on almost any subject. His mind was so full of digested and arranged matter, that a little premeditation, and committing to paper a few facts, dates and hints, were all that he required for an ample preparation to meet and gratify his class.

But besides the four courses of Lectures already mentioned, this learned man delivered a *fifth* on *Systematic Theology*, which deserves particular notice, as it was, probably, the very *first* course of Lectures on that subject ever prepared and delivered in the United States.

A small band of pious students, who graduated in the College in 1788, conceived so high an opinion of this venerable man as an instructor, in every department of knowledge through which he had conducted them, that they requested him, after the completion of their collegiate course, to give them some instruction and aid in pursuing their theological studies. With this request he promptly consented to comply; and at once formed the plan of preparing and delivering a regular course of Theological Lectures. To a mind so highly furnished and active as his, the distance between plan and execution was very small. He immediately addressed himself to the preparation of the proposed course, and after the short vacation, which commenced with the last week of September, he entered on the public delivery of it. His *first* Theological Lecture was delivered October 31, 1788, and the *last* January 5, 1791; thus extending to a little more than two years and two months. The whole number of Lectures comprised in the course, was *four hundred and eighteen.* His habit was, during term time, to deliver a Lecture every day in the

week, excepting Saturday and the Lord's day. These lectures were fully written out, and slowly read; and each hearer was required to take down the whole from the lips of the Lecturer. So that every student was expected to possess a complete copy of the whole course.

The theological class to which these Lectures were delivered consisted of about *eight* or *nine*. Of these, one or two had not the patience or perseverance to follow the venerable Lecturer through the whole course, but left him before it was finished. Then, as well as now, young men were found unwise enough to prefer their ease or convenience to their solid improvement, and upon various pretexts to deprive themselves of precious opportunities of instruction.

Dr. Nisbet never affected *novelties* in theology. He was not ambitious, in his theological instruction, to appear as an inventor of new opinions; or even of new exhibitions of truth. He, therefore, apprised his pupils that, in these lectures, he did not claim to be entirely original; that he drew freely from approved authors; and specified *Turretine*, *Witsius*, *Rivet*, *Le Blanc*, and others, as those which he most largely employed as auxiliaries and guides. And, accordingly, it has been stated, by one, if not more, of this class of students, that when a suggestion was made to him, that it might be desirable to commit these lectures to the press, he repelled the proposal with evident marks of disapprobation; because he would by no means palm them upon the public as an entirely original work.

When the Doctor had closed his course of lectures on Theology, the members of the class felt themselves so much gratified and interested by them,

that they requested him to give them some instruction on the *Pastoral Office*. With this request he also readily complied, and delivered on this subject *twenty-two* lectures, which were deemed excellent, and which were taken down from his lips by the students in the same manner as before.

In addition to all his labours as the President of the College, and lecturer on so many different branches of knowledge, he regularly preached in the Presbyterian church in Carlisle, alternately with the Rev. Dr. Davidson, Vice President of the College, and Pastor of the church. In this part of his public duties, as well as others, he was highly acceptable and popular. Without what are commonly called the graces of delivery, and though always preaching without written preparation, his discourses never failed to be in a high degree instructive and interesting.

Dickinson College, under the supervision of her learned and accomplished head, soon began to rise in reputation and in the number of her students. The first Commencement in that Institution was held on the 26th day of September, 1787; when nine young gentlemen received from his hands the first degree in the arts.

But notwithstanding these favourable circumstances, it cannot be denied, and there seems to be no adequate reason for concealing, that Dr. Nisbet, in coming to America, was not a little disappointed. It could scarcely, indeed, have been otherwise. The truth is, the first five or six years after he arrived in the United States formed one of the most unfortunate periods in which a stranger could have transferred his residence from Great Britain to this country. A

protracted and exhausting war had just closed. The currency and commerce of the nation were in a state of deplorable depreciation. In fact, the States, in their united as well as individual capacity, might be said to be bankrupt. Public and private credit had sunk to a very low ebb. The value of real estate was depressed to a most discouraging degree. Enterprise had no reward. There was no harmony of action among the States. The government of the Union, so far as it deserved the name, was in a great measure inert, for want of adequate powers. Indeed from the year 1784 to 1789, when the Constitution of the United States went into operation, so many were the difficulties of our confederated republics, and so gloomy their prospects, that many of the zealous advocates of Liberty and Independence began to be less sanguine in their hopes from the American revolution; and to doubt whether we were yet prepared to take that stand among the nations of the earth which the God of battles had assigned to us. Such was the state of the country at large.

The state of Dickinson College partook of the national embarrassment. An infant Institution, and, from the first but slenderly endowed, it was beset with most formidable difficulties. Neither its funds nor its students had increased as rapidly as its sanguine founders and friends had expected. Money was too scarce to allow many parents who desired it, to give their children a liberal education. The Legislature of the State of Pennsylvania was not then sufficiently alive to the interests of literature to make any considerable grants to seminaries of learning. And, to crown all, the Board of Trustees of the College

was a body so large, and consisted of gentlemen so little homogeneous in their principles and character, that united and energetic action for any length of time together was not to be expected, and certainly was not realised. They honoured the accomplishments, and were proud of the reputation of their new President; but they found it difficult to sustain him in that ample and honourable manner which he had been led to expect.

But besides all the difficulties of his official station, the social and literary state of the country, and the general state of public improvement, were such as was ill adapted to answer the expectations, and gratify the feelings of one who had been in Scotland almost the idol of a large circle of friends; who, whenever he went to Edinburgh, is said to have had at least one hundred intelligent and literary acquaintances, gentlemen of wealth and leisure, some of them among the first noblemen of the country, who rejoiced to see him, and in whose society and conversation he enjoyed the most refined satisfaction. In intercourse with such circles, and with easy access to large Libraries, in which he took so much delight, he found himself in circumstances, in many respects, eminently congenial to his taste.

It is true, indeed, that long before the subject of this memoir came to America, he had imbibed feelings of strong partiality to our country. He sympathized with us in our revolutionary struggle, and wished well to us in all our interests, before he was induced personally to cast in his lot with us. He came to the country, therefore, with partial feelings. And though he was aware that a body of youthful

colonies, recently become independent, could not be expected to present all the stability of order, and all the maturity of improvement, to be looked for in older states; yet he imagined that in a population in which there had been displayed so much intelligence as to understand, and so much high-minded patriotism as to contend for, the rights and privileges of freemen, he should find more of the simplicity and sturdiness of virtue than in his native land. The very circumstance of those who called him manifesting, in all their communications, an ardent zeal for the promotion of literature; and an earnest desire to attract from the other side of the Atlantic great and good men to "go in and out before them," for the purpose of lifting up the literary character of our country, was well adapted to beget a confidence that such men, when obtained, would be cordially welcomed, and honourably supported. No wonder, then, that some degree of painful disappointment ensued, when he found on his arrival in this country, that the general standard of literature was low; that a thorough classical and scientific course would be submitted to by very few of the youth who aspired to Collegiate honours; that the very small number of professional and other gentlemen who laid claim to literary character, were generally so busy as to render much social intercourse wholly impracticable; and that, of course, with his habits and estimates of things, there was little prospect of his being able very essentially to benefit the country, or to become, speedily, if at all, instrumental in elevating the character of its literature. And when, above all, he found the state of religion so low and languishing as

it undoubtedly was, for a number of years after the revolutionary war, it can hardly be imagined that a mind so enlightened, so sensitive, so enlarged, and so intent on the literary and religious improvement of all around him, as his, could be otherwise than disposed to gloom.

Besides these considerations, so well adapted to make an unfavourable impression on his mind, there were other considerations, more immediately personal, which could not fail to concur in diminishing his comfort. His salary, though by no means large, was imperfectly paid. The provision made for accommodating his family with a dwelling, was, from the beginning, far from comfortable; and the retired place of his residence, though, in many respects, exceedingly pleasant, presented very few social circles adapted to gratify a man so pre-eminently devoted to books, and so well fitted to instruct and entertain those in the highest stations.

As these things could not fail painfully to impress his mind, so it was natural that he should, from time to time, make some reference to them in corresponding with his friends in Scotland, many of whom took a deep interest in his comfort, and followed him with anxious inquiries as to his situation and prospects. Accordingly it is easy to see, from the language of several of his correspondents in Britain, that his situation was far from being one of unmixed comfort; and that as late as the year 1794 or 1795, the idea of his return to Scotland, though laid aside by himself, was not wholly abandoned by his friends on the other side of the Atlantic.

The following letters will serve to throw some light on the subject of the foregoing remarks.

Dr. Nisbet to the Earl of Buchan.

"*Baltimore, 24th June,* 1786."

"*My Lord,*"

"Being detained here by a fit of the ague, and understanding that there are several English ships in this port, I take the opportunity of testifying my sincere respect to your Lordship, though I have very little intelligence to communicate. Knowledge is very rare in this country, and has been the least of our importations. The love of money checks its progress, and the desire of it among the generality, is not great. It is true that Colleges, Academies and Schools are founding in many places; but there is a penury of men, books and rational regulations. Political knowledge, however necessary in this country, is very imperfect, on account of the undue and false notions of liberty that generally prevail. Public spirit is rare; and even where it exists, it is checked by the dreadful reflection, that it can be of no use unless it can be infused into a majority. And where is the community so enlightened that a majority of it are wise men? A king, surrounded with guards, ministers and courtiers, is not more inaccessible than the minds of a multitude beset with prejudices and ignorance. Natural knowledge, however suitable and necessary in this country, where it has so large a field, does not flourish among us. No species of science is so much honoured as Mathematics, which, however excellent as an adminicle, is barren in itself. The king of France has purchased a Botanic Garden

in Jersey, which may, perhaps, excite some curiosity for Natural History. Mines have been said to be discovered in several places, but I cannot ascertain the fact; and even if the report were true, the possessors of those mines would do well to keep them a secret. I believe the ancient adage still holds—*Si qua foret tellus quæ fulvum mitteret aurum, hostis erat.* I have discovered a strange coincidence between a part of the superstition of the Indians, and that of the ancient inhabitants of Europe. Wherever the Indians discover *bees*, they take for granted that white men will soon come after them. In the seventh book of the Æneid, when a swarm of bees had hived near the palace of king Latinus, the same construction was put on the phenomenon. *Continuo vates; externos cernimus, inquit, adventare viros.* This is strange enough. Virgil never visited America; nor did the Indians ever read Virgil. I have been assured that in the western parts of this country, on both sides of the Mississippi, there are monuments discovered which render it almost certain that that region has been inhabited by a people much more civilized than its present inhabitants. A gentleman who is proprietor of a mine, assured me that they had discovered digging tools many fathoms under ground. I was informed by another, that, in sinking a well, he found a small furnace of brick work thirty feet below the surface, with coals and brands that had been ignited. Near the falls of the Ohio there is a salt spring in the bed of the river, which had been inclosed with stone work of unknown antiquity, to keep out the fresh water; but this inclosure being ruined by the freshets, the inha-

bitants have no use of the spring except when the river falls so low as to leave its environs dry. In many places circular fortifications have been discovered, inclosed with deep ditches, and fenced with a breast work. Yet no traces of ancient habitations are to be seen. Perhaps the inhabitants have been contented with wooden houses, like Attila, though in possession of a great part of the Roman empire. Pit coal is found in abundance in the western counties of Pennsylvania, and at Wyoming on the Susquehanna; but the great abundance of wood renders it of little use as yet. The want of industry is one great cause of the little progress of the useful arts in this country; but the climate is enough to damp the most active minds. Many people here observe the *siesta* as regularly as the Spaniards and Italians; finding their animal spirits, if such there are, very apt to be evaporated by the intense heat of the sun: yet we hear of none dying here by a *coup de soleil*, though that accident is common in France and Italy."

"The humour of making new States seems unpropitious to this country. Kentucky is admitted into the Union on condition of their putting themselves in the order of a State before a given day, and taking a proportional share of the public debt of Virginia. Vermont is tacitly permitted to govern itself, but not represented in Congress, or admitted into the confederation. The state of Massachusetts threatens division, though it has not yet taken place. The differences at Wyoming still subsist, though not publicly supported by the State of Connecticut. Ethan Allen is actually amongst them, and undertakes to command their forces against all opposition; and a

number of ill-disposed and profligate people are assembling from all the states, which may occasion a civil war for a time."

"I hear that grants of American lands are becoming merchantable commodities on the Exchange of London; and I am just now informed that an eminent American land-jobber is actually at Hamburgh, and finds purchasers in that city. If this is true it will interest foreigners in the prosperity of this country, and may be a means of encouraging industry, and introducing useful hands, and useful arts among us, of which we are still in great want."

"I beg my best respects to Lady Buchan, and am with the most unfeigned esteem,"

"My Lord,"

"Your Lordship's much obliged,"

"Humble servant,"

"CHARLES NISBET."

"*The Right Honourable the*
Earl of Buchan, Edinburgh."

The next letter is from Dr. Nisbet, to the Rev. *James Paton*, the pious and excellent pastor of *Craig*, a town in the neighbourhood of Montrose, with whom the Doctor maintained a long and endeared friendship.

"*Carlisle, 10th Jan.* 1787."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"Yours, of the 9th of August, reached Philadelphia on the 22d of November, but did not reach me for three weeks afterwards, as we have no post yet established on this road, and communication is diffi-

cult this hard winter. I had got a detail of all the transactions of your neighbourhood by Dr. Erskine, and some others. I had no design of writing you in a dark manner; but many things here cannot be related in a few words. I am sorry for the deaths you acquaint me with, especially for those of worthy ministers, who have been at all times scarce. I am glad to hear of the welfare of your family, and wish I could give you any idea of this country. Knowledge, industry, virtue and religion are greatly wanting; and though every man is a politician, true politics are little understood. The lands are mostly possessed by poor, ignorant, or indolent farmers; and yield extremely little in comparison with what they might yield under wise and efficient management. Trade is in a low state. Labour is very dear; and servants scarce, bad, ignorant and lazy. In the possession of an industrious, enterprising people, this country would be a very rich one. Tobacco, hops, vines, and all sorts of fruit thrive here, but none of them to any extent are cultivated in this neighbourhood. Hemp and flax are rarely cultivated; though what little is sown rises plentifully. The people here have no attachment to their estates, but are ready to sell them whenever a buyer offers, and to retire into the wilderness. As this new world is unfortunately composed, like that of Epicurus, of discordant atoms, jumbled together by chance, and tossed by inconstancy in an immense vacuum, it greatly wants a principle of attraction and cohesion. Such may come in time, but it has not yet taken place. Legislative wisdom is greatly wanting, as most of our members have no other poli-

tical qualifications than their election bestows on them. Common sense may be introduced, but it must be gradually, and with difficulty. The great extent of the country is likewise against its improvement. With regard to my own situation it is tolerable, though not according to expectation, and must improve only by the improvement of the public. I have more trouble with the old than with the young. Our Trustees are generally men of small acquaintance with letters, even those that have been bred to learned professions, and can scarcely be made to understand their duty. The importation of books has almost ceased since the war, except novels, plays and such trifles. There is little curiosity, and consequently little knowledge. The youth readily receive the superficial and introductory parts of knowledge; but are little fit for abstract studies, or any thing that requires perserverance and application; and being mostly destitute of books, helps, and objects of ambition, it is no wonder that they flag in their studies, and sit down contented with low attainments."

"My department in this College is moral philosophy; but, for the want of an adequate number of teachers, I am obliged to give a course of logic and metaphysics. We have but four effective teachers, though we need two more at least. Donations have raised our library to about 2800 volumes. It contains many good books; though our wants in that department are still numerous. Our numbers are short of a Scotch seminary, but nearly equal to those of this country. We have been in pretty good health since July last; though the extremes of heat

and cold are still hard on us. As to sending out Probationers from Scotland to this country, I could not advise it till the people here are more sensible of their wants. A man must have the spirit of martyrdom that would travel thousands of miles, over large deserts, not knowing where he is to settle, and when settled, having no certainty that most or all of his congregation may not leave the place, without taking him along with them. In September last, I made a journey to New York, which is 210 miles hence. The country of Jersey is flat and pleasant, and pretty well settled, though numbers of the inhabitants are daily moving westward. The Raritan, the Passaic, the Hackensack, and the Hudson are fine navigable streams, though little commercial, except the last. New York is beautifully situated on the extremity of an island, and resembles an European city more than any place I have seen on this continent. I viewed, with a mixture of pleasure and concern, many of the scenes of last war, and surveyed the progress of the fire which was once so fatal to this city. Almost all the ruins were built up in a tolerable, and some of them in a magnificent manner. The houses are higher than those in Philadelphia, though mostly of brick. The inhabitants are gay and luxurious in the extreme, though not much attentive to religion, or paying their debts. I preached to two very large congregations, the most genteel in appearance I ever saw, though I believe very few are opulent. I dined next day with the President of the Continental Congress, and the Representatives of nine States. Some of them are decent sensible men, and others young and raw, having been chosen only

for their military service last war. Long Island is almost as near New York as Ferryden is to Montrose. It is a beautiful high land, seemingly well cultivated, and affords a fine prospect as far as the Narrows, about ten miles below the city. Staten Island has a wilder, but not a disagreeable appearance. Mr. Thompson, after his wanderings in Virginia, has got a good congregation in Johnstown, 150 miles above New York, Mr. Monro was ordained in June last, about 70 miles east from Carlisle, on the frontiers of Maryland; but I have never seen him, or had a letter from him. Mr. Addison, who went out with us, has been a year at Washington, 225 miles west of this place; but not being able to get settled, on account of the refractory humour of his Presbytery, is likely to change his profession for the more gainful one of the law. A daughter of Mr. Grant, late minister of Dundurcus, to whom he was engaged, came over to Philadelphia last summer. He went down, and they were married in September last, and passed this place on their way home, while I was at New York. Mr. Ross and his wife are settled at Pittsburgh, where he has made purchases, though I do not know whether they will be gainful, at least for a time. He is building a distillery, and has boats for supplying the town with coal. It is probable that Pittsburgh will be a considerable place in a short time, as so many are daily flocking to that neighbourhood. Twenty waggons, upon an average, every day, have passed that way in the course of this year, and we have seen them passing even since the snow fell."

"What may be the fate of this country is uncer-

tain; but there is a large scope for industry, if directed by wisdom, and not interrupted by war. We have little or no intelligence here, which makes us very dull, and the people in general are not curious either as to what passes among themselves or elsewhere. We are alarmed with the report of a war with England, upon a suspicion, it is said, that the people of this country intend to seize some of their West India Islands; but your ministry would be foolish indeed were they to entertain any such suspicion of people that have neither ships nor any desire for insular possessions. The people here are not in the least disposed to make war against any power whatever, except with Spain, whose possessions are too distant to be in any danger from their efforts, at least for a century to come. Some thoughtless people in the southern States would be glad to declare war against Spain, for opening the navigation of the Mississippi, though they have no use for such a navigation at present, and cannot procure the consent of the other States to any thing of this kind. I hear of little or no emigration to this country: 520 people, being a whole parish in the Isle of Skye, emigrated this spring; but were advised to land at Quebec, as they were assured that England would make war against this country in a little time. I observe in the London Reviews, that pamphlets are writing in England, prophecying the submission of this country to Great Britain; and Lady Leven's letter, without date, which accompanied yours, contained a question, whether there was a disposition in the people here to return to their allegiance. I suspect that something is brewing among you to re-

vive the horrors of war in this country; but I hope that the death of the Prussian monarch may turn the attention of your great Commoner to conquer America in Germany, which will give no disturbance here. Manufactures must be introduced into this country before it can flourish; and this cannot be done but by a long peace, and the removal of strong prejudices."

"I have just now read Dr. Anderson's book on the improvement of the British Fisheries and Western Islands. It contains many maxims of sound sense and good policy. I only differ from him as to the consequences of emigration; though he says that Dr. Price has been brought over to his opinion. He does not consider that almost every person who emigrates from Great Britain is in distress and poverty, and can get little or nothing to consume at home, for the encouragement of industry at home: whereas in his reasoning he supposes them all to be people of fortune, and excellent customers to the farmer, the butcher, the brewer, and baker, whereas most of them have not a morsel of bread, nor can get any work to earn it. Were Dr. Anderson's scheme to be instantly carried into execution, emigration might become less necessary for many of the poorer sort. But at present I am certain that it is the interest of poor working people to emigrate to this country. If they come over young, they may, by industry, acquire the property of a good plantation in ten or twelve years, which they could never hope for at home. If this country were cultivated by English or Scotch farmers, its product and riches would be very great, and it might maintain a large

and opulent landed interest. But no body will be a tenant in a country where he can so soon become a proprietor; so that our landed interest consists of a yeomanry who labour their own lands, and who are, of course, not very enlightened. Their children, almost uniformly, embrace the same profession, as lands are always to be had. A tradesman, though he might make more money, is little thought of in comparison with a farmer. This perverse way of thinking, however, must continue either until they are in distress for want of foreign commodities, or till some projecting genius embraces the profession of a tradesman or manufacturer. Dr. Anderson seems likewise to be wrong in discouraging the building of villages, as all towns have grown out of them, even Rome and Laurence-kirk not excepted. They may be improper in the Hebrides, but in a fertile country I think they ought to be encouraged; as all counties here are divided into townships. I have frequently told our farmers that they ought to build the rudiments of a town in the most convenient situation near the centre of each of these townships, and told them that these would soon increase, especially if they would breed some of their children to trades, and settle them in these villages. The whole lands of the townships would rise in value. But this is what they cannot comprehend; and they would be sorry to contribute to the emolument of the proprietor of the lands nearest the village."

"I am in hopes that the difficulties we are under here in discharging the high taxes laid in the last years of the war, will be soon over. Our ordinary taxes are a mere trifle in comparison of yours in

Great Britain, and cannot occasion the smallest inconvenience. I am pleased to observe that our Legislature are beginning to discern the importance and necessity of making good roads, and setting about that great work. I wish also that they could be persuaded to discourage travelling on the Lord's day, which abounds here to a shameful degree. We have laws good enough for that purpose, but nobody is appointed or encouraged to put them in execution. In a word, many things among us need reformation; and, though we have the means in our own hands, there is little prospect of their being reformed in haste. The ignorance of many of our citizens, who have come hither in a rude state, and their wanting opportunities of improvement by the distance of their dwellings, and the general neglect of public worship, as well as the scarcity and dearness of good books, contribute greatly to continue them in their ignorance, and to strengthen their prejudices. The Courts of Law are almost the only operative cause that brings men together here, or awakens the faculties of their minds; and you cannot imagine to what degree these are employed and encouraged among us. Our Lawyers are not so learned as yours; but they are generally men of respectable knowledge and liberality of manners. The landed interest are the least enlightened, though there are some honourable exceptions. I imagine that the want of genius among our news-writers, and the barrenness of events in our papers, are likewise partial causes of that stagnation of the human faculties which prevails in this country; as well as the want of cross posts, and readiness of communication. I live a very laborious life, and

must expect no interruption of labours for at least nine months to come. I am endeavouring to get the people to attend public worship, and we hope to have two sermons next sabbath, which is a great reform. Some people are beginning to think, and I hope better times are approaching. Nine of my pupils are destined to the service of the Church, and have meetings for prayer. But things must go on slowly. I consider myself as engaged, with others, in the inglorious but useful labour of digging under ground, and laying the foundation of a building that may rise and make some figure in another age. Let me hear from you soon, and send me all the intelligence, public and private, that you can collect. Remember me kindly to all friends. I am, Reverend and Dear Sir, yours, affectionately,"" "CHARLES NISBET."

"*Rev. Mr. James Paton.*"

Every one who recollects the state of our country from the close of the Revolutionary war in 1783, to the adoption and organization of the Federal government, in 1789, during which the foregoing letter was written;—the wide-spread poverty—the prostration of commerce—the general discouragement—the mutual distrust—the absence of enterprise—and the prevailing gloom—which were portrayed in a preceding page—will undoubtedly regard the picture drawn by the venerable writer as an unexaggerated one; and will only wonder, that, coming as he did from a land of wealth and of established order—he did not load his canvass with still darker colours. The truth is, this learned and excellent man fell into a mistake very common among the most enlightened who

visit our country from the other side of the Atlantic. He found it difficult to make the requisite allowance for a young country, struggling into national organization and order. He measured American facts by European principles. Had he lived thirty years longer, he would have seen that the want of intelligence, of wakefulness to their advantages, and of enterprise in pursuing opportunities of improvement and of profit, was one of the last charges justly imputable to the inhabitants of the United States.

It was remarked, in a preceding chapter, that, in the great contest between the British government, and her American colonies, which issued in the independence of the United States, Dr. Nisbet was a warm whig, and gave much offence to many in his own country, by taking, on a variety of occasions, the side of the Colonies. With these feelings he came to America. It cannot be disguised, however, that when he found, after being for a time in the country, the general state of things to be so different from what he had been taught to expect;—the low state of literature; the deranged condition of our commercial affairs; the failure of the founders and guardians of his College to redeem their pledges; and the erratic notions and conduct of many of our politicians respecting the governmental questions of the day;—he was not a little revolted, and began to fear that the Republicanism of the United States would prove a miserable failure. And it must be acknowledged that the character of the first five or six years of his residence in our country, was such, that a mind of his sensibility, and accustomed to European establishments,

might well be pardoned for giving way to such a revulsion.

To this may be added, that the impression from what he saw around him, was greatly deepened by the occurrence of the French Revolution, and the terrific scenes which, for more than ten years, that nation presented to the civilized world. From the moment that revolution commenced, Dr. Nisbet seemed to regard it with horror, and predicted most of the dreadful results which are now matters of history. Of course, when he saw so many in the United States disposed to rejoice in that Revolution, and to applaud its worst features, he found it difficult to restrain his feelings, or to repress the language of indignant vituperation. When this subject was alluded to, it seldom failed to call forth his keenest wit, his most biting sarcasm, and the most distressing apprehensions of fatal mischief likely to be poured forth from France, as from an awful volcano, on ourselves, and on every other nation within the sphere of her influence. In the course of a most interesting and long-continued correspondence with him, the writer of these pages recollects no one subject on which he poured out so much weight of thought; so much fervid eloquence; so much that was adapted to exhibit him, amidst all his cutting severity, as one of the most benevolent and patriotic of men.

From the Countess of Leven and Melville.

"*Dear Sir,*"

"*Melville House, Jan. 20th,* 1788."

"I received your letter dated the 17th of September, about a week ago; by which I am sorry to find

your situation is not likely to become more agreeable; and that you cannot give a more favourable representation of the state of religion, &c. in that part of the world where you now are. I am afraid the picture you exhibit is by no means a caricature, extorted by prejudice or discontent; as I find others corroborating your statement, especially concerning the state of religion. A young gentleman from this neighbourhood writes in the very same strain. He says the holy sabbath is not regarded, and the churches of Philadelphia very ill attended; not above forty communicants, he states, in the church which he attended. I have always wished, since you landed there, that you had come out from among them: for instead of being of more use there than at home, as matters now stand, I fear you are of much less. I have never had more than one view of that matter altogether, as you well know; for I always told you my sentiments, though with much diffidence, and am sorry that you did not take your departure from America, as you had once firmly resolved to do. I always think that you will yet end your days on this side of the Atlantic. Tobesure much depends on the state of your family, of which you never say any thing; how the children are situated and employed, &c. Your letters are very entertaining and instructive; but always make one sorry upon your own account, and on account of the woful change for the worse upon that once highly favoured part of the world. I forget who it is that says—

"Religion stands on tiptoe in our land,
"Ready to fly to the American strand."

And surely I thought it *had* taken its flight thither; for once I thought they were all saints, especially from some samples I saw of them, and good reports we heard. But, by all accounts, religion has taken wing again; though, alas! I do not find that she has landed on the British shore, or would meet with a welcome there."

"I look for something extra coming from our beloved Sovereign's tedious illness;—that it will not be unto death, but for the glory of God. It has called the attention of all ranks, and made a sort of solemn pause, and given many people time to consider who never think at all. The public amusements are all hushed, and churches crowded to hear the many fervent prayers to heaven for the restoration of his precious health. The royal family are all quite dejected, and afflicted, which may be of great use by the blessing of God. The last time the king was abroad was at the Chapel, where he would be, in spite of advice to the contrary; and the Queen, and Princes and Princesses have the worship of God in the Queen's apartment. These, and other things too tedious to mention, appear to be tokens for good. The nation was never more united, or more fervent in their wishes than they are at present for the preservation and establishment of the king's health. Surely there never was a sovereign more universally beloved."

"I am at a loss how to fill the rest of my paper with such intelligence as would be interesting to you. All your friends are well, so far as I know."

"March 2d. I must just say to you, as the worthy and Rev. Mr. Newton said to me, in a letter which I received from him lately,—began about two

months before it was finished;—that he sent the first part to convince me of his intentions; but from various occurrences, he had never found it convenient to finish what he had begun. This too, has been the case with me; and I would not send such a confused scrawl to such a distance, were it not as a proof that I had not forgotten you. My fear is, that my long silence may make you suspect what can never be truth concerning me, that I forget or can make light of a friend. Beside that, you may be assured I consider the loss as my own, as your letters are a great entertainment to me. But the truth is, I am kept too busy; though I fear often idly busy. I hope this will find you well."

"Since this letter was begun, a great change has been wrought in the state of affairs in Britain by the happy recovery of our beloved Sovereign. The joy is beyond description or imagination from the lowest to the highest. I must refer you to the public papers for all that happened during the sad interval of his illness. There appears to be a great work upon the wheel at present. I wish I could have an opportunity of conversing with you, to hear your lively observations and animadversions about many things. Let me know how you are as to health and contentment; and whether you feel settled in life; or intend to end your days in Britain."

"I am sorry to find that poor Mr. Muir has got no settlement. Perhaps, by this time, it may be otherwise. He is, I believe, a good man; what his foibles are I cannot say. When you write, pray let me know the history of your own family. This family, by the blessing of God, and his infinite mercy,

are all alive, and much increased. Lord Balgonie has three sons. Mary has had nine children, of whom seven are still living; and she does not look to be above twenty. Remember us in your prayers. We have much to be thankful for."

"I thought you had corresponded with worthy old Dr. Gillies. He is alive and well, and would esteem a letter from you very highly. Mr. Martin and family are all well. He remains 'the husband of one wife,' notwithstanding your prediction. My Lord sends his best respects to you, in which my daughters join. Please to offer mine to Mrs Nisbet; and be assured that I continue to be with real esteem, your humble servant,"

"W Leven."

"*The Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet, Carlisle.*"

From the same.

"*Melville House, August 1st,* 1788."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"Though I am distressed with sore eyes, I have taken a large sheet of paper, in case I can find wherewithal to fill it. It is with regret that I reflect how long it is since I had your's of December 25th. Not answering it immediately is the reason of the delay; for a variety of pressing occupations makes me neglect many necessary duties which slip out of my mind."

"I am sorry that you have no better news to write from your quarter, either with regard to your own situation, or the state of religion among you. I shall be glad to hear what your great expectations have resulted in from the new Constitution of the United

States lately proposed and adopted. When I mentioned the possibility of a *young man being better* to go to America than you, I surely intended to say to *combat*, not to *comply with*, the prejudices of the people; for in many respects, indeed, this might be much against a man's character. In all difficult emergencies a steady person is the fittest; as sinful compliances are always attended with bad consequences. Though in other matters it is often necessary and winning to use gentle means."

"It is a matter of deep regret to be informed of such a woeful change for the worse as America, in general, has undergone of late. I once looked upon it as the most highly favoured corner of the earth, in many respects, but chiefly with regard to religion. When the Lord honoured Mr. Whitefield to be a leading man among them, in many places religion flourished and increased. He had no bye views or ends. The glory of God, and the good of souls, were the main spring of all his movements. The war did much hurt; turned the people idle and forgetful of God, and indeed of every thing but liberty, falsely so called. And, I doubt not, it has been to many a fatal liberty, very different from that of 'the children of light.' Poor Mr. Thompson is arrived, in a very depressed situation. It is several months since he came to Britain. He is now in Dundee. He describes his situation to have been most affecting. Some of the people were unable to pay his stipend, from poverty; others, from want of will. The money he carried out, (having sold his annuity,) he bought land with, of which he could make nothing; and was obliged to slip away, even without his poor

wife, who staid, I fear, as a hostage. I hope the people of Dundee mean to serve him in some shape or other. He has, indeed, had a sore time of it."

"There is nothing in this country to write about but what you will get from the newspapers and magazines. A great deal is said and attempted about Sunday schools, and reformation of manners, which, by the blessing of God, I hope will have a good effect. The former have already had wonderful effects, especially in large trading towns, both in Scotland and England. Your friends about Glasgow, &c. could tell you much about this. I thought that Dr. Gillies and you corresponded. Surely Dr. Witherspoon and he correspond. He is always busy about something, and will be to the last, if his faculties remain. I beg to be remembered to Dr. Witherspoon, when you see him. I regretted not seeing him when he was in Scotland.* It surprises me that, when you write, you say nothing about your own family. I hope your son has gotten rid of all impediments in his sight, and is doing as you could wish him."

"I find, by a letter from Mr. Muir, who was at Bermuda, that he is gone to New York. Of this Dr. W. would inform you, as he has written a short Preface to a few Sermons he has published; the price of which, by the time it reached me—a single volume —was 19 shillings and 2 pence. He thoughtlessly sent it by post; whereas in a ship it would only have been a trifle, if any thing. He is a pious, good man,

* Dr. Witherspoon, soon after the close of the American war, was commissioned by the Trustees of Princeton College to visit Great Britain, for the purpose of soliciting donations to that Institution. His mission, however, was not attended with much success.

I am persuaded, and wish he may succeed where he now is. He married too young, which is sometimes no small evil. He does not mention whether he has any children. I should be glad to know how he is received, or whether he is in any settled way. I am glad he is under the tuition of Dr. Rodgers, to whom he desires me to direct for him."

"I shall be gratified to be informed how you and your family keep your health. Have you laid aside all thought of returning to your native land? I sincerely wish you and yours may be happy. You have imbibed, I perceive, a bad idea of the Methodists since you went abroad. There are good and bad in all sects and parties. Yet strange that one who ever knew that eminent and favoured saint, Mr. George Whitefield, should harbour a doubt that the Lord was with him of a truth, and countenanced his labours more than those of any other man since the Apostles' days; and at this moment I dare say that the best people in America are plants of the precious seed sown in his time. It hurts me to find *you* speaking lightly of the Methodists in general. The good that some of them have been enabled to do is most amazing. It is no wonder that Satan opposes them, and lays snares for them."

"But my paper is nearly full, and my eyes are failing. I dare not send any pamphlets, as the transportation of them is so expensive. I will try to get this letter sent a *pennyworth*. I fear at best you will think it a poor one. If I knew of any persons or family you wished to hear of, I would mention them. Mr. Martin is well; as are all this family, present or absent, so far as I know. Remember us

in your prayers. Good reason have we to say, that the Lord is good and gracious. My Lord sends his best respects. Give mine to Mrs. Nisbet. How would she like to come back to Montrose? With much esteem, I am, Sir,"

"Your humble servant,"

"W. LEVEN."

"*The Rev. Dr. Nisbet, Carlisle College.*"

From the same.

"*Melville House, Nov.* 27, 1789."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"It is truly presumptuous in me to begin upon a full sheet. Good example, I know, is of much worth: but we are often imitators in those things which we are least qualified to copy after. Your *great* letter of August 9th came to hand September 12th, and was a fund of entertainment and instruction, in regard to many things which we were before unacquainted with. To get these testimonies from a far country, upon the word of veracity itself, is rare news. Plenty of news, indeed, pours in upon us, but little truth. What David said 'in his *haste*' that 'all men are liars,' a worthy friend once remarked, he might now say at his *leisure.* Your letters always give me pleasure; but I still find a cloud hanging over them: and my regret for your absence from your own country, is increased by every insinuation of your own for having left it. The decaying state of religion, and its fatal consequences, must greatly affect yours, and every righteous spirit. The famine of those fit to be made friends, and of hearers in your Church, must cast a damp even upon your good spirits. It is a

great mercy that you and your family have enjoyed good health; and you have all reason to hope that your indefatigable labours will be blessed. But you cannot expect to be long able to undergo such an exertion of strength of body and mind, as your present labour requires. You do not mention what assistance you have, or whether those employed are diligent and useful among the students, &c. If you were destitute of such comforts as the world cannot give, your situation would indeed, be most uncomfortable; as it is so little suited to your natural genius. But you have the comfort of knowing, that whatsoever state you are in, it is by the Divine Providence; that God has the ordering of it; that all the ingredients in your cup, and all the varieties of your state, are from Him. When you consider that there is no present state of things, how favourable soever, without an alloy; that there is something in every condition of life, in every place, to convince us of the fruitless effort of seeking rest here below. While we complain of grievances in this or that situation, we might find worse in another. In every state there is something amiss; but, blessed be God, there is no state that can exclude those comforts and consolations which cannot be taken away. Peace grows every where from Him who is 'our Peace.' He is the Comforter of all the ends of the earth."

"I cannot think of any thing to write for your amusement. There is nothing on this side of the Atlantic in which you are interested, but what you know as much of as you probably wish to know. Nothing seems to be improving so fast as the art of swindling, and deceiving the unwary. There are

many 'masters of arts' in this profession; so that one cannot help admiring their ingenuity, while they grieve that it has not been employed to better purpose. The state of the French nation, and of many places in Germany, you will be informed of. They are in a most deplorable situation; and I believe the the wiset politician can form no idea of what will be the issue. Mr. Martin has written you all the news he could collect, which I am glad of, as I find that my letters can be little else than tokens of remembrance and of good wishes for you and your family. I hope your son will do well, and disappoint all your fears. Our youngest son, George, is now settled in business at Ostend, and is much satisfied with his situation. Has your son gotten his sight perfectly in his eye that was affected? My mind is at present in much anxiety and concern about my dear and only sister, Lady Banff. She has been in a declining state, from various causes, for these twelve months past. She has been better and worse; but there seems little appearance of returning health. That sweet family will experience a great loss, if it should please God to take her to himself. She has three daughters still unmarried; and Mrs. Murray, whom you will remember, has not seen a day's health these three years, since she had her third child; but I hope is now getting better."

"I write all this as if to obtain your pious prayers. But, alas! what changes may have taken place before it can make its way to you! Mr. Martin will have mentioned about the weather, earthquakes, &c. Nobody remembers such a wet season. My Lord intends to send with this a few Magazines, containing

some account of General Assembly matters, and a few Scotch newspapers, which we hope will amuse you. Though I know nothing that at present occurs which promises to interest you, I beg you will continue your interesting and amusing history to me. We have little from America that can be depended on. Mr. Martin, I take for granted, wrote you about Dr. M'Gill. Nobody can say how that matter will end. It had much need to amend. I hope you will hear from Dr. Gillies what the Presbytery of Glasgow has done, and mean to do. If you send a commission to procure any books for your Library, I wish you would get two volumes entitled 'Horæ Solitariæ,' or Essays, both Doctrinal and Practical, upon the Divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and also upon the subject of the Trinity, showing it to have been a truth received from the earliest ages, and confirmed by the principles of the Gospel, in two volumes, octavo. The author's name is not prefixed to the work; but it is well known to be by Ambrose Serle, Esquire, Secretary to Lord Howe, during the American war. He is also the author of "The Christian Remembrancer," which I will send with the Magazines. His works are very much esteemed by good people; and I dare say you would admire that work very much, as it is esteemed a masterly performance; I mean the *Horæ Solitariæ*."

"I must now conclude this very trifling epistle, which I am ashamed to think is to travel so far, to so little purpose; and which can serve only as a mark of that esteem which I have entertained for you ever since *Nostrodamus* introduced us to each other's acquaintance; or rather those enemies of yours, who

raised such ridiculous stories about a sermon of your's, which I resolved to get to the bottom of by inquiring at the fountain head. Best respects await you from all here, and mine to Mrs. Nisbet. My Lord is much entertained with your letters, and desires to be particularly remembered to you. Many thanks for the Pastoral Letter. It is an exceedingly good one. I would be much indebted to you for any scraps of lectures, or explanations of any passages of scripture, which you may judge adapted to be useful. I am very partial to your talents in this way; and really few possess them. You ought to publish a volume."

"How do Dr. Rush and all his family? It is a long time since I had the pleasure of hearing of them; but I do sincerely wish them well. Believe me, with much esteem and friendship, your humble servant." "W. LEVEN."

"*The Rev. Dr. Nisbet, Carlisle College.*"

The Earl of Buchan was a less punctual and a less devoted correspondent than Lady Leven. Still his letters are peculiarly characteristic, and by no means uninteresting. The following are a specimen.

"*Dryburgh Abbey, December* 21, 1790."

"*Rev. and dear Sir.*"

"I did not receive yours, of March last, by the way of Liverpool, until two days ago: and since that letter contains observations and reflections which indicate the uneasy state of your mind, which I wish to remove, I lose no time in giving you my opinions without reserve, which you will, I dare say, think

worthy of your deep and frequent attention, and will ponder them in your mind yet oftener and more maturely than those relating to the future state of America, with respect to which I find no cause to change my opinion."

"Re-enter, I beseech of you, into your own mind, and study more the πολις του θεου than the πολις των ανθρωπων. How could you expect unregenerated and unsanctified human nature to be any otherwise in in the new than in the old hemisphere? How could you expect that the spawn of a highly civilized and corrupted nation, could, in colonies, formed at a time of uncommon corruption in the parent state, should resemble in principles and in practice those societies that have grown out of a gradual alteration in the substance of original union among men in the infancy of society; and which in the lapse of ten or twelve centuries, have passed through all the different states of wandering families, feeding on kernels and fruits; of barbarous hunters; more innocent tenders of flocks and herds; of husbandmen; and lastly of manufacturers and traders, united in great, wealthy and luxurious empires, tending again, continually, towards destruction and separation by corruption of manners; while the wheel is again to be revolved in the same eventful manner, perhaps for ages?"

"Why do you perplex your understanding, and wound your feelings by brooding over, and inquiring needlessly into the obliquities of mankind in the place of your residence? Were you in Scotland, or in any part of Europe, that your imagination might picture, as more suited to your taste, do you think you would not discover all the same roguery, the

same disinclination to good learning, and the same errors and vices that cling to society wherever it is formed upon the face of this planet, and, I suppose, upon the face of all the myriads of globes that elude the minutest research of our modern astronomers? No, sir, you cannot, after a moment's reflection, expect any material change upon the general construction of human society; nor do those Scriptures on which I hope and believe you depend for your best information with respect to futurity, give you any reason to look for such changes on this side of that which bids defiance to, and renders absurd all our speculations upon such inscrutable subjects."

"From your youth you destined your life to the service of religion and virtue, by preaching the everlasting Gospel, and exemplifying its precepts in your dealings and conduct in society. Re-enter into your own mind, and renew your covenant to preach that Gospel faithfully, and to practice its precepts in your life, without perplexing yourself with needless discontents concerning the crookedness and perversity of human nature. Who told you that the way was wide and easily practised, that leads to perfection and to everlasting felicity? *Only the foolish philosopher and the idle speculatist in politics.* Follow rather Him who tells us that the way is narrow and asperous that leads to life, and that there be few indeed who find it. Seek you, therefore, to enter in at that gate, and give but an inattentive ear to any of the idle reasonings that draw us from the contemplation of the Supreme Beatitude. Hold Seneca in one hand, and Saint Paul in the other; and look up to Heaven for direction and for happiness. You cannot

now desert the charge which, in mature age, you chose upon your bended knees, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, to set forward the improvement of a great but infant state. Make a Palinodium to the society you are connected with, not to utter a syllable, in word or in writing, to your discomfiture, but in action for your comfort, which, notwithstanding the circumstances you mention, will, I am persuaded, remove any of the troubles you complain of, and enable you to be still useful in the promotion of piety, virtue, and useful learning."

"Dedicate your leisure to the study of nature and its glorious Author, and fence yourself against the various evils of life, by that Divine philosophy of the soul, which uniting it by grace to the eternal Fountain of wisdom and consolation, will support you under every trial, and render the evening, and the very close of your ministry, and of life, delightful. In the turbulence of society, you must ever expect many disagreeable disappointments and vexations, and every thing about you will be subject to change, as it has been to all mankind ever since the beginning of the world. But remember that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. You say you have health, and long may you have it! I never enjoyed much health from my infancy, and I have been unsuccessful in all my undertakings, except that of dedicating myself, body and soul, to the service of God, in the performance of his will in benevolence to his creatures. Yet I complain not of mankind. I look up to my Father which is in Heaven, and see nothing but his power and his goodness in the government of the Universe, and look forward to

the grave with something more and better than philosophic indifference. Lady Buchan joins me in good wishes for your health and happiness." "I remain, your sincere friend," "BUCHAN."
"*To the Rev. Dr. Nisbet, &c.*"

From the Same.

"*Dryburgh Abbey, June* 28, 1791."
"*Reverend and Dear Sir,*"

"I cannot allow any opportunity of writing to you to pass. This will be handed to you by Mr. Archibald Robertson, painter of Aberdeen, whom, as recommended to me by my learned friend, Mr. Professor Ogilvie, of King's College, Aberdeen, I desire to recommend to the honour and pleasure of your countenance in America."

"I am happy to think you are now more agreeably situated than formerly; and if you can persuade yourself of what I know to be true, that Britian is not worthy of the residence of the friends of a free constitution of government, you will reconcile yourself to that of America, with all the inconveniences you have so justly depicted."

"I have written, in the 21st. number of the *Bee*, a monitory paper on America, which may, perhaps, reach your College. I beg leave to reccommend the Bee to your attention and patronage in your neighbourhood. I hope you will encourage *Book Societies* in your town and neighbourhood, and the public Libraries will multiply apace, which will disseminate useful knowledge."

"As Britian has been, since the Christmas of 1783, in a deep sleep of politics, I can send you no news.

All around us the voice of Freedom is heard; but with *us* nothing is relished but vile effeminacy and lubricity of manners. So here, Doctor, I present you with a Rowland for your Oliver. *Rest, and be thankful.*

"Lady Buchan joins me in kind wishes; and I always am, Rev. and dear Principal, with great regard, your obedient humble servant,"

"BUCHAN."

"*Principal Nisbet,*
Carlisle College."

But of all Dr. Nisbet's correspondents in Great Britain, the most persevering and punctual was the venerable Dr. Erskine, of Edinburgh, one of the most pious and public spirited men of his day. That gentleman probably maintained a more extensive correspondence with American clergymen than any other European Divine. And probably, no private man on the other side of the Atlantic ever sent so many books gratuitously to this country as Dr. Erskine. He probably had twenty or thirty correspondents in different parts of the United States; and it is believed that almost every letter he wrote was accompanied by a package of books;—some of them for his correspondents themselves; and others for the public libraries of Colleges and other institutions, to which he was constantly remitting rare and curious books. Of this he never made any parade; as he was one of the most modest, as well as most pious of men. But it is a fact which ought to be known and remembered by the friends of theological learning and literary taste in the United States. He was a punctual

and affectionate correspondent of the elder President Edwards, to whom he sent, from time to time, a number of scarce and important books no where to be found in America. And after the death of that illustrious divine, whose praise is in all the Protestant world, he continued to direct especial attention to correspondence with the friends of religion in this country, until his death in 1803, about one year before the decease of the subject of this Memoir.

The three following letters are from his ever busy and ready pen:

"*Lauriston,** *April* 21, 1789"

"*Rev. and dear Sir,*"

"I have before me your letters of September 16th, and December 29th, 1788. It has been an exciting and remarkable time in Britain since the beginning of November. On the 5th of that month, by appointment of the last Genral Assembly, a Thanksgiving was observed through Scotland, for the Revolution in 1688. Most, or rather all of your old friends were hearty in the measure; as was Dr. Blair, on the other side, and many more. But my colleague† was, throughout, cold, or rather unfriendly to the scheme, perhaps from the fear that on such an occasion, whig principles would be zealously inculcated. In fact they were so by Mr. Kemp, Mr. Jones, and several others in our Presbytery. Your

* Dr. Erskine's residence was in Edinburgh; Lauriston was a little rural retreat near the city.

† His colleague was the celebrated Dr. William Robertson, the historian, and Principal of the University of Edinburgh,

friend‡ chiefly considered the evils of Popery, the imminent danger of these evils, and the remarkable deliverance. My colleague, Mr. Greenfield, and some others, chiefly considered the influence of the Revolution in promoting just ideas of liberty, and in extending liberality of sentiment. And this has been much the tone of the printed sermons on this occasion. None of them, except Mr. Pedie's, who succeeded Mr. Pattison, pleased my taste."

"The joys of Nov. 5th, were soon turned into sorrow, by the king's dangerous illness. Seldom were more general and sincere prayers put up for the recovery of a Prince. This was occasioned, not only by fears of the unsettled government which often happens under a Regency, but by the virtuous private character of the king and queen, and the king's late proclamation against Sabbath breaking; the general approbation of the measures of Mr. Pitt; the danger apprehended by some, lest a new administration might not have pursued his plans with regard to foreign alliances, and the reduction of the national debt; to which I might add, a growing conviction that the American war was occasiond by information, false indeed, but which it was natural for the king and ministry to credit. No good change was expected by a Regency, unless, perhaps, in Scotland, where my friend Mr. H. E. would probably have succeeded Mr. H. D. whose high talents are so much obscured by his habits and manners."

"Church affairs here, as well as civil, would have probably fallen into better hands. But we could

‡ Meaning himself.

hardly hope that the great affairs of the British Empire would be better conducted. Fears were increased by a belief that the Duke of Portland, and Mr. Fox had less of the Prince of Wales's ear for some time past, than Mr. Sheridan. But the anxiety of disinterested friends of the public, and their deep concern on account of the king's illness was soon ended by a recovery next to miraculous, for which last Thursday was observed as a day of Thanksgiving. My subject on that day, was the improvement we ought to make of Gods changing the times and seasons. I herewith send you a few books. I commit them to your discretion, excepting that I do not wish the work of Clodius to be put into a public library. He is half way over to the German 'Rationalists,' as they call themselves."

"I am, dear Sir,"

"Yours, affectionately,"

"JOHN ERSKINE."

"*Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

From the same.

"*Lauriston, Jan.* 25, 1791."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"I sent you, on the 21st of July, my 'Hints and Sketches of Church History' and two or three other books, to the care of Mr. Campbell, of New-York. I have since received yours of June, 1790, and thank you sincerely for so long and entertaining a letter, to one who only sends you scraps. The magistrates of Edinburgh, returning to the plan of presenting, are likely in time to fill our vacant pulpits, so as to empty our Churches of many of the most sound, serious and

judicious Christians. Our last vacancy is supplied by Mr. Finlayson, Professor of Logick, who is surely an adept in that science, if bold assertions, ill natured inuendoes, and unbecoming levity may pass for argument. Dr. Henry died two months ago; and, it is said, has left another volume of his History nearly ready for the press. He was a bold, able and honest man. Provost S. intended Mr. R——. of D——. as his successor; in gratitude for the attention he paid to his son's education. But, though Mr. R—— has considerable abilities, especially as one acquainted with the fine arts,—people have in general thought so lowly of his pulpit and theological talents, that Provost S— very wisely gave it up, and Mr. S. of L. came to Edinburgh; one of the same sentiments as to Church policy, but less violent, and a much superior preacher. Mr. S— of L— died suddenly on a scaffold, where he was accompanying his daughter to see the last races. He was one of a decent ministerial behaviour, and of sound sentiments; but of second rate abilities; and his usefulness was much impaired by his being often held in leading strings by men more crafty than himself. The Session and Corporation of L. have been prevailed upon to elect for the second charge Mr. T. M—, son of Dr. M—, through fear that, otherwise, Mr. D— would not get the presentation to the first charge. Mr. M. thinks Calvinism the only rational and consistent scheme of Christianity. He will make a more eloquent, though, perhaps, less plain preacher than Mr. S—. His style and manner are as animated as his father's are dull. The father would be the better of the son's polish; and the son would not be the worse for studying

scripture as critically as his father does. We made a great acquisition, two years ago, by Mr. B— of S— succeeding Dr. M— in the Cannongate. Mr. S — of W—, an excellent and able man, has gone to S—."

"My 'Sketches' have been favourably received by those who attend to Theology and Church History, unless a certain party, through whose influence, perhaps, no account of them has yet appeared either in the monthly or Critical Reviews. I have considerable materials collected for a second volume, but have not yet advanced far in reducing them to order, and preparing them for the press."

"I now send you, to Mr. Campbell's care, a package of books, which I hope you will receive in safety."

"I am, dear sir, yours, affectionately,"

"JOHN ERSKINE."

"*Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

From the same.

"*Lauriston, October 29th,* 1791."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"I hope you received my parcel of July 26th. I have had no letter from you since. Much about the time of my writing you, worthy Mr. Grant, of Ochiltree, died. The pious Patroness, Lady Glenorchy, applied, as formerly, to Dr. H— and me for advice as to filling the vacancy. If I had been *sole* in the nomination, I should certainly have recommended Mr. R——, of K——, Mr. C——, or some other, whose good behaviour in a Chapel of Ease, or in a charge in the establishment, where a good successor

was probable, merited that distinction. But it was necessary we should recommend persons known to us both; and it would have had a bad appearance if those who had studied under Dr. H— had been overlooked. On that account, we recommended Messrs. T— and L—, as the two most proper persons for that parish, in the opinion of both of us. I wished the success of the last, as the most learned and zealous; but I believe the best ministers in the city and suburbs differed from me, as they considered the first as more prudent. The three last ministers who have come to Edinburgh are Dr. G—, Mr. F—, and Mr. S—. Mr. M. Junior, who succeeded Mr. O—, of L. six months ago, preached an able sermon on the admission of Mr. S— two weeks ago. I think my colleague (Principal Robertson) preaches with as much distinctness and vigour as ever, though his deafness much deprives him of the pleasures of society. Mr. McCulloch, of Dairsie, has published Lectures on the first twelve chapters of the Prophecy of Isaiah, in one octavo volume. If this volume succeeds, he intends to continue his Lectures on the rest of the Book. They contain no new criticisms, or *augmentum scientiarum;* but I hope will be useful to ordinary readers. I hear that Whitaker, the author of a "History of Manchester," sometime since published, has just published a "History of Arianism."

"The Birmingham riots show the strange blind zeal, not only of those engaged in the horrible scenes, but of many Church-of-England divines, and some Dissenters, who have treated these outrages in too tender a manner, and without proper expressions

of detestation. Carnal weapons are not the proper means to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

"I was remarkably free from colds last winter; but in May and part of June I have been distressed with rheumatic pains. Since these subsided, I have been troubled with bowel and stomach complaints. They have not, however, hindered my preaching regularly."

"I have the pleasure of sending herewith a package of books; particularly some new works from Germany, which I hope will be interesting to you, both on the score of instruction and entertainment."

"My wife and daughters, and my son David, join in offering to you and Mrs. Nisbet, and all your family, our best wishes."

"I am, dear sir, yours, sincerely,"

"JOHN ERSKINE."

"*Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

That Dr. Nisbet enjoyed the affectionate friendship of the celebrated Dr. Beattie, of Aberdeen, was mentioned in a preceding chapter. This friendship did not terminate with Dr. Nisbet's departure from Britain. As a specimen of their correspondence, the following letters, it is presumed, will not be uninteresting to the reader.

"*Aberdeen*, 10*th August*, 1788: *Sunday*."

"*Dear Sir*,"

"I wish it were in my power to show any civilities to Mrs. Craig, or to any person recommended by you. But in the present case I am deprived of

the pleasure of doing so, by the lady's resolution of setting out immediately on her return to America. She arrived here at a time when I was from home; and I never heard of her till yesterday, when she did me the honour to call upon me, and inform me, to my very great regret, that finding things here not exactly as she wished and expected, she was to set out with her child on Monday morning early in the Fly for Edinburgh, and thence make all haste to Greenock, as the ship in which she intended to be a passenger would sail about the middle of this month. Thus I am deprived of the means of cultivating her acquaintance, from which I am sure I should have derived great satisfaction."

"Your letter is a very short one, but I thank you for it. The sight of your hand-writing recals a thousand agreeable circumstances to my memory. Your departure for America gave me concern, and was indeed a disappointment; for a few days before you went, you informed me by letter, that you would not go. I am happy to hear that your health is better, and that things are so well with you. Mrs. Craig informs me, to my great joy, that at Philadelphia there is peace and opulence, and every appearance of public prosperity. The country you are now in has great resources, and I hope they shall, and heartily wish they may, be rightly improved."

"When you have leisure, you would do me a great favour by giving me some account of your schools and colleges, the state of literature and your methods of education. From this country I can send you nothing new; but every thing will be so to me which you are so good as to send me from yours. I re-

member nothing particular that has happened of late to any of the friends you left behind you. My brother-in-law and sister, and what remains of their family, are well. You would hear of poor James Valentine's fate; he perished in a hurricane off Jamaica the very day on which he was promoted to the command of a ship. His brother has not been so fortunate as we could have wished, or as his great abilities in his profession seemed to deserve; however he is pretty well, and commands a vessel that goes alternately to the Mediterranean and the Baltic. His sister commonly lives with me; but is just now, with my boy Montagu, on a visit to her father and mother at Montrose. My elder son was last year appointed my assistant and successor. It was what he wished himself, and it is an office for which he is eminently well qualified. The King presented him to it, upon the unanimous recommendation of the college. I mention these particulars relating to my family in order to stimulate you to give me intelligence equally minute with regard to yours; for I am greatly interested in their welfare, and beg leave to offer my compliments and best wishes to them all. Our old friend, Charles Keith, is settled as a physician at Morpath, and does very well. I passed two days with him last year. Thomson is *semper idem*, that is to say, worse and worse; he drinks as much as possible, and does nothing else. David Walker, I am sorry to hear, has stopped payments."

"If you have a convenient opportunity, I would trouble you to present my humble service to that venerable and wonderful man, Dr. Franklin, to whom I had the honour to be known about seventeen years

ago in London; to our Reverend friend Dr. Witherspoon, and to Dr. Rush, Professor of Chemistry at Philadelphia, to whom I am under great obligations."

"Adieu, my dear sir. It is not likely that you and I shall meet any more in this world; but let us write to one another sometimes, and think of one another often."

"Most faithfully and affectionately, yours,"

"J. BEATTIE."

"*The Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

P. S. "This has been the finest summer I ever remember to have seen; and all over Great Britain there is every appearance of an early and most plentiful harvest."

From the same.

"*Peterhead, July 2d,* 1792."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"I cannot tell you how much I am gratified by your very kind remembrance of me, and how much I have been entertained by your two excellent letters. Be assured, that though a dilatory writer, I am not conscious of any diminution in my affection for you; that I often think of you; and that when I meet with any of our common friends, I often speak of you in terms which you would not dislike. For reasons that will occur to yourself, I cannot give a particular detail of the reflections suggested by the very interesting information with which you have favoured me. I shall only say, that it coincides, exactly with the conjectures I had formed, and the intelligence I have received from some others; and

that my principles on the subjects in question, are the same with yours."

"You are pleased to speak favourably of the first volume of the 'Elements of Moral Science.' The second is now in the hands of the printer. I will endeavour to send you both. What I have said in the second on Slavery, and on the principles of Politics, will not please every body; but I have honestly given the sentiments which I have been teaching and pondering for thirty years and upwards; and they are sentiments in which, the more I see and hear of this changeable world, the more I am confirmed."

"I need not give you any of the public news of this country: you will see all that in the newspapers. Our national prosperity is, just now, greater than I have ever known it: and nothing is wanting to make us a very happy people, but a right sense of that prosperity, and gratitude to that good Providence which bestows it. But we are evil and unthankful; and too many of us are not only discontented, but turbulent. Both in religion and in politics, we are pestered with foolish theories; the effect of levity and ignorance. If we could read more Greek and Latin, and less French; more histories, and fewer novels; and if we could speak less, and think more, it would be a good thing for us. The theories of the present time often put me in mind of that old sophist, (you will remember his name, though I do not) who took it upon him to give Hannibal a lecture on the military art. The harangue was much admired by the author, and by such of his audience as knew nothing of practical tactics. The Cartha-

ginian, however, bluntly said, that he never before had met with a blockhead so ignorant, and so conceited."

"You will be glad to hear that my sister, and her son and daughter are in their usual health. My brother-in-law, now in his 86th year, though he has been confined to bed these five years, eats well, and sleeps well, and is perfectly easy, contented and happy. Socinianism flourishes mightily at Montrose; the ——, who are all become authors, are the great apostles of that church. Our old friend —— died last winter of a fever. His son, who is in a very thriving way, offered to supply him with as much gin and porter as he could swallow; but the heroic Charles wandered from alehouse to alehouse, and tippled to the end of the chapter."

"Of myself, I have nothing good to say. That old vertigo of my head (as you have often told me) will never leave me until I am dead. But I have so many other complaints that I cannot expect to be long here. About eighteen months ago, I was visited with an affliction, which, though I am entirely resigned to the will of Providence, has broken my heart. My son (whom you will remember) died at that time, of a consumption. His illness lasted a year, during which time I was always with him. He had every advantage that could be derived from affectionate attendants and able physicians, and every thing was procured for him that the faculty recommended; but all was vain. The king appointed him my assistant in the College five years ago; and an able assistant he was. Indeed, to all who were well acquainted with him, he was the object of admiration

and delight. The inscription which I wrote for his tombstone contains his character in brief; and I assure you without any exaggeration. It is in these words:—

Jacobo Hay Beattie, Jacobi filio:
Philosoph. in Acad. Marischal Professori.
Adolescenti
Ea modestia,
Ea suavitate morum,
Ea benevolentia erga omnes,
Ut humanum nihil supra.
In bonis literis,
In Theologia,
In omne Philosophia,
Exercitatissimo.
Poetæ insuper,
Rebus in levioribus faceto,
In grandioribus sublime.
Qui placidam animam efflavit
XIX Novemb: MDCCXC:
Annos habens XXII, diesque XIII.
Pater mœrens hoc marmor posuit.

"I have collected and arranged as many of his papers as will justify every particular of this character; and intend, for the use of my friends, to print sixty or a hundred copies, one of which will be sent to you. It will be either one pretty large volume, or two small ones; and, if I live, will be put to the press next winter. The epitaph touches upon the more important parts only of his character; but I will take the liberty to inform you further, that he was an able chemist, botanist, anatomist, profoundly skilled in the theory of music, an excellent performer on the violin and organ, an elegant drawer, a master of Greek and Latin, a proficient in the French tongue,

an admirable public speaker, expert in fishing, fowling and fencing, and such a mechanic, that, two years before his death, he superintended the building of a very good organ for himself. In wit and humour he was not inferior to you; and though his piety, modesty and delicacy were exemplary; he retained, even when he came to be a man, all the cheerfulness and playfulness of a boy. His poems are partly English and partly Latin; for he composed with equal ease in both languages. He foresaw his death long before it came, and met it with true Christian meekness and resignation. All this may seem extraordinary; but it is all literally true, as many persons now alive can testify."

"I send this under cover to my friend, the Bishop of London, who will frank it as far as his privilege extends, that is, I suppose, to Falmouth."

"With best wishes to Mrs. Nisbet and your family, I ever am, dear sir, your affectionate humble servant, J. BEATTIE."

"*Rev. Dr. Nisbet,*

Principal of Carlisle College, Pennsylvania."

In the year 1790, Dr. Nisbet's eldest daughter, Mary, was married to William Turnbull, Esquire, a native of Scotland, who had been for a number of years a respectable merchant of Philadelphia; at that time resident in the city of Pittsburgh. This proved a happy marriage. And although the subject of this memoir, up to this time, and even several years afterwards, continued to be importuned by some of his friends on the other side of the Atlantic, to return to Scotland, as will be seen by letters to be hereafter

introduced; yet his advancing age; his almost invincible aversion to a sea voyage; and the happy settlement of his daughter in this country; concurred with a variety of other circumstances to bind him to the United States, and to render him less and less disposed to withdraw from the important station to which he had been called. He saw, too, that while the American Union was agitated by party violence, and by what he deemed unwise govermental measures; his native country, and, indeed, the whole civilized world, were agitated in a similar manner, and by similar means. There was little hope, then, of bettering his situation by returning to the old world. At the same time, the ties which bound him to the new, were becoming, every day, more strong and more interesting."

CHAPTER VI.

His residence in the United States continued.

In the Autumn of the year 1791, that the acquaintance of the author of this Memoir with the venerable subject of it commenced. The author had, anterior to this, pursued his Theological studies under the direction of a beloved and venerated Parent, near Dover in Delaware, his native place. On the decease of that parent, who had been the pastor of the Presbyterian church in Dover for nearly half a century, and after having received license to preach the Gospel, he determined to avail himself, for at least a few months, of the conversation and guidance of the distinguished man, whose learning, and whose course of Theological Lectures, had received so large a share of public approbation. For this purpose, in the month of November, of the year above mentioned, he repaired to Carlisle, and found Dr. Nisbet in good health and spirits, and busily engaged in his labours as the Head of Dickinson College, the winter session of which had, a few weeks before, commenced.

He had never until then seen the eminent man whose instruction he sought. He expected to find so much learning connected with reserved and formal, if not repulsive manners; but was agreeably surprised to find Dr. Nisbet as affable, as easy of access, as sim-

ple and unostentatious in his manners, and as attractive in all the intercourse of social life, as any man he had ever seen. He received the inexperienced young Licentiate, with all the condescension and kindness of a parent; and after the first hour, placed him as much at his ease, as if he had been hanging on the lips of that parent according to the flesh, whose loss he had recently been called to mourn.

Such were the habits and manners of this venerable man, and also of his amiable family, that the writer, from the first day of his arrival in Carlisle, felt himself at home in his presence. His practice, in ordinary cases, was regularly, every evening, to sit with him in his domestic circle two or three hours. And on whatever subject he might desire information, whether in Theology or Literature, ancient or modern, he had but to propose the topic, and suggest queries, to draw forth every thing that he wished. Nor were Dr. Nisbet's instructive communications of that declaiming or preaching kind which some learned men are fond of exhibiting, but which can scarcely with propriety be called "conversation," since they are all on one side. They presented a constant flow of rich amusement and information, and yet so entirely free from ostentation, dogmatism, or pedantry, that every listener, was at once instructed, entertained and gratified. Probably no man on this side of the Atlantic ever brought into the social circle, such diversified and ample stores of erudition;—such an extraordinary knowledge of men, and books, and opinions; such an amazing fund of rare and racy anecdotes; and all poured out with so much unstudied simplicity; with such

constant flashes of wit and humour; and with such a peculiar mixture of satire and good nature, as kept every company whether young or old hanging upon his lips, and doing constant homage to his wonderful acquirements.

Sometimes, when in the midst of these delightful effusions, a new visitor would step in, and introduce a new topic of discourse, it was wonderful with what facility he could change the train of conversation; strike upon a new and rich vein of thought; and excite new and endless surprise by his intellectual resources. And if any member of the circle attempted to enter the lists with him as a competitor in either wit or learning, as was sometimes the case with those who did not "know their man," he soon manifested, with perfect good humour, with what entire ease he could distance every one on either track. Of scenes of this kind, the writer of this Memoir has been so often a witness, that he cannot call them to mind at the present hour without mixed feelings of surprise and admiration.

He was led, too, in consequence of the strong impressions then made by the instructions of the living teacher, to doubt whether the popular estimate of the means of knowledge anterior to the discovery of the Art of Printing, is not, in some measure, both inadequate and incorrect. There were then, indeed, few books. Their scarcity and costliness rendered them wholly inaccessible to any but the wealthy and the powerful. However eager a poor man's desire for knowledge, he could very seldom obtain it by *reading*. We are, perhaps, sometimes ready to carry our pity for them on this score to an extreme. They

were, indeed, destitute of a privilege of immense importance. But the multiplication of books has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. They had another source of instruction in some respects superior to that which we now enjoy. They were in the constant habit of travelling to different and distant parts of the world, as far as they were able; and of conversing and disputing with the greatest and most learned men wherever they went. Thus the ancient Greeks and Romans, anterior to the advent of the Saviour, pursued knowledge. Thus Roger Bacon, John Duns Scotus, and many of the most profound men of the middle and subsequent ages, constantly sought to strengthen and furnish their minds. They went to different Universities, residing several years in each, for the purpose of free, unreserved personal intercourse with the great men in each; that they might not only gain the knowledge which these men possessed, and were ready to impart; but that they might, by the literary and scientific conflicts, in other words, by the intellectual pugilism, then fashionable, acquire a wakefulness, an adroitness, and a vigour of mental action which unceasing oral disputation is peculiarly adapted to nurture. It is not intended in these remarks, as all will understand, to undervalue books. They are a gift of inestimable value. But it is intended to estimate more highly than many seem inclined to do, personal communications and conflicts; and to represent the latter source of instruction as preferable, on some accounts, to books. The knowledge acquired by unlimited reading, may be more extensive; but that which is gained by conversation, and especially by unreserved discussion and oral controver-

sy with superior minds, will generally be found to have about it a life, a distinctness, a clearness, and an adhesion to the mind, which do not ordinarily appear in an equal degree in the *mere devourer of books*. It is certain that the writer of this Memoir, when he left Carlisle, in the spring of 1792, carried with him a deeper impression than he ever had before, of the immense advantage to be derived from coming into contact daily with an acute, active and richly furnished mind, from which, as much might be learned in one hour, (especially on subjects concerning which books rare and difficult of access, are the only sources of instruction from reading,) as from the private study of a week. He left it also with no small regret that he had not derived from the enjoyment of this privilege more ample benefit; and a conviction, that if he had been more aware of its value at the time, and more awake to its importance, it might have been made far more productive of fruit than it was. Alas! it was with him, as with most others, that the most precious advantages are seldom adequately appreciated until the possession of them is withdrawn.

Happy are they, who, sensible of the defects of an intellectual culture formed by *mere* reading, habituate themselves to the mingling of reading with close thought; to independent inquiry; to impartial canvassing and sifting of the opinions proposed in books; to pausing, and comparing book with book; and, as far as possible, to the conversation of sound and strong minds, accustomed to think, and disdaining to walk in trammels. Without these adjuncts to reading, there is little hope of forming that robust mental

structure; that intellectual promptness, vigour, and activity which so eminently characterized men formed in the middle ages, by travel, by oral communication, and by personal conflict.

The compiler of this volume has never seen a man so well adapted to benefit those around him, in these respects, as Dr. Nisbet. The rapidity and force of his mind in conversation; the pre-eminent richness of his mental furniture; his vivacity; his wit; his inexhaustible store of striking anecdotes, and of happy classical allusions, rendered him at all times a most instructive and entertaining companion; and served more indelibly to impress upon the mind what came from his lips than from those of almost any other man.

The writer was not so happy as to enjoy the privilege of hearing any part of Dr. Nisbet's course of theological lectures. Their delivery had been completed ten months before he took up his temporary abode in Carlisle; and they were never repeated to a second class. A number of individual students, indeed, from time to time, resorted to him for direction in their studies; but the regular formation of a theological class was never again accomplished. The reasons of this reflected little credit on the youthful candidates for the ministry at that time. Some were discouraged by the prospect of a course of study which was to extend to between two and three years! This seemed a long time to those who imagined that an adequate course of theological instruction might be brought within a much shorter compass, and whose parents, still more impatient, could not be persuaded that such a long, and, as they thought, tedious train-

ing could be necessary to prepare candidates for the ministry for their work. They saw some other denominations, with none of these advantages, and indeed with scarcely any study, sending forth scores of popular men; and hastily supposed that so much protracted labour in preparing for the ministry could not be needful.

It was understood, too, that the requisition of the learned and venerable lecturer, that every member of his Theological class should commit to writing the whole of each Lecture, as it fell from his lips, was regarded with aversion, and deemed a drudgery too severe to be pursued through several years. This requisition would never have been made in other circumstances. But the Lecturer well knew that books were extremely scarce, especially in the western parts of our country; and that, therefore, the possession of a complete system of Theology, prepared with great care, would be a treasure of permanent and peculiar value. Even this, however, was not properly appreciated by short-sighted young men, and still more short-sighted parents. On these accounts, a second class was never formed; and, although the Lectures in question were copied by several Theological students who had not the privilege of hearing them delivered, and were read in manuscript by a number of the neighbouring divines, they were never again repeated in public.

When we contemplate the deplorable mistake under which a large portion of American candidates for the ministry, as well as others, appear to labour respecting the requisite extent of professional study, we cannot wonder that enlightened and reflecting

men regard it as deeply humiliating. That this mistake should still continue to be indulged by so many theological students, after all that has been said and done by the General Assembly of the Church, as well as by individual ministers, to correct the evil, is indeed astonishing, and only to be accounted for on principles which reflect great discredit on the judgment of those who allow themselves to be the dupes of the error in question. When one who understands the nature and importance of mature study, sees so many of our aspirants to the sacred office contenting themselves with a superficial course, can he be at any loss to explain why it is that so large a proportion of their number are consigned to obscurity, and comparative uselessness all their days; why their leanness appears so conspicuous in all their public and private ministrations?

No one, of course, will wonder, that Dr. Nisbet, after coming immediately from the Colleges and Theological Halls of North Britain, in which a training so extended and mature was then, and still is, demanded, should have been surprized and deeply revolted at the superficial plans and habits of study which he was constrained continually to witness, and yet had not the power to correct. Had he not felt and spoken respecting this infatuation very much as he did, it would have warranted an imputation either on his discernment or his faithfulness. If he fell into any mistake on this subject, perhaps it was in not making a more adequate allowance for the intrinsic difficulties of the case; and in not setting himself to obviate the evil by means more accommodated to the state of things on this side of the Atlantic, than those

which were suited to European habits. It was, no doubt, a severe trial to a man long accustomed to the best literary society, to ample libraries, and to bands of youth taking large views, and cherishing ardent desires of knowledge; to find so many of the young men committed to his care unwilling to submit to the labour of study; complaining of hardship when it was required of them; and considering it as a great privilege to bear the name, and be decorated with the honour of college students, with few or none of their appropriate attainments. Who, in similar circumstances, could have had reason to be confident that he would have been more patient, or less disposed to direct toward the glaring evil the artillery of indignant wit and withering sarcasm, than was this great and good man?

The following letter from Lady Leven is the *last* found among Doctor Nisbet's papers from that excellent and remarkable woman. The infirmities of age were now creeping upon her; her health soon afterwards declined; and although her decease did not occur until 1798, her latter years, it is believed, were passed in much feebleness.

"*Melville House, August 22d*, 1793."

"*Dear Sir*,"

"I have just received your letter and parcel, which has roused me as from a dream, and awakened in me sincere regret for having never acknowledged your former long letter. To convince you that I had intended it, I send this sheet, upon which I had begun an answer; but having let that opportunity slip, have never found a more convenient season. I think my-

self that I have become unfit for writing letters. If ever I had any capacity that way, it is much impaired. But I cease from apologies, and admire your goodness in forgiving this *seeming* neglect; but in deed there is nothing *real* in it. You have laid me under a great obligation by the treasure you have sent me, and for which I return a great many thanks. I have not yet proved them; but I know they need no proof, as they are from the same tree from which I have tasted such sweet fruits formerly."

"I wonder Mr. Martin did not deliver the commission which I gave him to thank you, and make my excuse for not writing when he did. He is not happy, having gotten his son a preacher and a kirk. It gives me great pleasure to find that your health is so good. It sometimes comes across me that you will yet land on your native shore, and during the remainder of your life, enjoy the society of some old friends, among whom I rank myself. I am frail and feeble as to health; at the same time I wonder that I am so well. It is, indeed, a singular mercy to be free from many of those distresses incident to old age. My dear friend (the Earl of Leven) is surprisingly healthy; and all my children and grand children enjoy good health. I must tell you a circumstance that is matter of wonder and praise. Our son John, in the guards, returned to Britain just when the army was preparing to attack Valenciennes, which was a very unlooked for event by his anxious friends; and as comfortable as unexpected. The cause was, that three companies were to be raised, and added to the regiment; and he was appointed to one of them, which gives him the rank of Colonel, besides,

bringing him home. I leave it to you to reflect how this ought to affect tender parents. Yet we ought always to 'rejoice with trembling,' not knowing where our danger or safety lies; but, in the mean time, it is relieving."

"The situation of our troops before Valenciennes engrosses the attention of all ranks and denominations at present. What wonderful havock and barbarities have been committed since I wrote you last! What the end of these things will be, is only known to Him that knoweth all things. O that men would become wiser and better by the judgments of the Lord, since goodness and mercy have failed of bringing them to repentance!"

"Mr. Martin will write you all the news. I am a very bad retailer; and indeed the most rapid sketch would fill a volume. I will send you some newspapers, in which you will find much true and much false. The siege of Valenciennes engrosses at present the attention and anxiety of the public. May Divine mercy prevent dreadful consequences! I dare say people in Philadelphia constantly get the newspapers from Britain. Scotch newspapers will, of course, suit your taste best. We are all quiet at present. No sickness or pains are troubling our constitution. It is thought that the many late receipts for curing public disorders have had a good effect. The 'rights of man' have been of more use to show them their wrongs (by many just commentaries published on this subject) than any method that would have been discovered."

"Aug. 25. The news of the surrender of Valenciennes, came to our ears, and is indeed wonderful

in our eyes. I wish it was more believed to be the doing of the Lord. But nothing yet has been said, in al the accounts, which ascribe this wonderful success to a higher power than that of man. That such an event has been brought about with the loss of so few men, is indeed marvellous. I will send you newspapers, and leave all remarks to your own invention, which is not only fertile, but witty and wise."

"I have just finished reading your 'Notes,' which I had not perused, when I began this letter. I thank you very much for them. They have no fault but a *small* one. If ever you favour me with any more, you must, if you please, stretch out your hand writing, in pity to my *dim sight*. I have great reason, however, to be thankful that my sight is no worse. My Lord read some of them easily by candle-light. Would you have any objection to our publishing some parts of these Notes, if Dr. Erskine approved? There are some remarks that would be well timed, and might be useful. The author might, or might not be concealed."

"Dr. E. published a Sermon sometime ago, which he was solicited to do, which I will send you. He preached a Sermon at Doctor Robertson's death, which, together with a Lecture, were esteemed master-pieces, and nothing but the state of his health prevents his complying with the many earnest solicitations to publish them. It is with much pleasure that I venture to say, he is continuing better, and preaches often, though very poorly. He is a wonderful man! Dr. Gillies is also much recovered. He has, at last, been prevailed upon to take an assistant. Mrs. Gillies died last winter, after which

Mrs. Leslie staid with him near half a year. He is always anxious to hear about you."

"I take for granted that Mr. Martin keeps you informed with regard to church-matters. I hope, in time, they will improve, and truth prevail against error; as inquiry has been making concerning this subject at Drs. Erskine and Hunter, and their party."

"Oh! it is strange to reflect that America is so much in the French interest! I should imagine this partiality to be only apparent, and that Britain will still have a hold of their hearts. Though parents may have been thought harsh and severe in their measures, yet they are parents still; and 'blood is stronger than water,' as the proverb says. Perhaps they may yet unite, and take one of our princes to rule over them. What says *Nostrodamus* concerning the present times and prospects? I hope some body sent you Mr. Fleming's prophetical conjectures concerning many things. I have but one copy."

"Now, that I have entered upon small talk, I shall rather tire than either edify or amuse you. It is, however, a gratification to me that I have covered so much paper, in 'cracking' with my worthy friend in a far country; but would much rather do it at Melville fire-side. It is always a great pleasure to me to hear from you. Let me know what is doing, either public or private; how you are now with respect to temporal concerns; and how religion advances, or declines; whether there is any encouragement for good ministers, if we could spare any from our small stock. Indeed, it is not the best *here* that generally meet with the greatest encouragement.

Perhaps you could send us a sample of *your* divines. I should like to see some of your raising, if they answer your wishes and care. Many of ours are of the fashionable sort, and seem to have learned a new creed. I do not know how they can sign the Confession of Faith with a safe conscience. *We* do not hear many of them preach, but we hear much *of* them. Their burden, indeed, seems to be light, and they seem to have laid aside every weight, and all besetting sins, and teach me so to do; but not in the way that He teaches who taught as never man taught, and that cannot be learned by the precepts of men. They have never yet learned of Him who said: 'Take my yoke upon you.' Though I fear this class of divines, old and young, are too numerous, yet there are many excellent pious young men. But I must not waste my paper, having to thank you for another letter, just now received, bearing date June 14th. I take this as a great mark of kindness, especially when I was appearing to you under the mask of unkindness, forgetfulness, &c.; a very unfair copy of my countenance toward you, my worthy old friend. I desire that whatever appearances may occur in that false light, you may regard and treat as not even the shadows of the truth; which, however, I have already told you at the beginning of this letter. I am sorry you should make any apology for your excellent 'Notes,' which we highly prize, and wish that they and more of the same useful tendency, were in print."

I am sorry for what you write concerning ———. It does not correspond with his former professions of friendship. He must ever have my regard and good

wishes, as in duty bound. But many are the changes which a little time produces in this uncertain state of things. Blessed be God! 'the foundation of the Lord standeth sure.' This is firm footing; all is sand beside."

"I cannot pretend to answer your letter, further than to say, that I approve of all the solid reasoning which it contains; that I beg the continuance of so edifying a correspondence; and that you inform me concerning the situation of your family. I beg also to be informed how Doctor Witherspoon stood the operation which he underwent, and whether it had any good effect, which I sincerely wish; and would request, that, if you have any correspondence with him, you would say, in your next, that I remember him with esteem and good wishes. My good friend sends his best regards to you. He is much entertained with your correspondence. Lord Balgonie's family is well. He has four promising sons. Lady Ruthven has two sons and five daughters; all healthy and thriving, so far. Her eldest son has been above a year in England, with Mr. D'Courcey, who was in this country long ago in Lady Glenorchy's family, and is now settled at Shrewsbury. All the young man's tutors approved of his going there; and we had a visit from him and Mr. D'C. this summer. He is much improved, and much beloved by every body. I write you this as a matter of great thankfulness. The girls are all very promising. Sir J. and Lady Jane are well, and their only daughter, a fine tall girl. Have you any grandchildren? Where and how are your young people employed? How does dear Mrs. Nisbet keep her health?"

"I am afraid you will find my letter to contain very little for your edification,—I ought to have said information. Whatever it contains, I intend it as a proof of cordial good will, which you must accept for the deed. I can have no doubt concerning your usefulness, though it may not appear conspicuous to yourself. Being content with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, is a happy sign, though not a 'sign of the times.' To whom can we go, or to whom should we go to seek the truth, but to the precious word of God which testifies it; and though all men should become liars, this foundation standeth sure. You complain of preaching to a dead people. I wish I could tell you it would be different if you were here. A deep sleep seems to prevail over all ranks, so far as I can see or hear of. What says Mr. Martin? I have access to see no church that is differently situated. With esteem and friendship, believe me, dear sir,"

"Your humble servant, "W. LEVEN."

"*Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

"P. S. I thought that I had written to you that the author of *Horæ Solitariæ* is a Mr. *Serle*, who was secretary to Lord Howe, during the last war; and now enjoys a place under government of about twelve or fifteen hundred pounds sterling a year; as they know him to be a man of business, as well as of learning and piety. He has written many pious small tracts, for the use of the poor, &c. I sent you his 'Christian Remembrancer.' He is a very singular man in his generation. Tell me your opinion of his publications."

In the spring of 1792, Doctor Nisbet paid a visit to Governor Dickinson, whose reputation and munificence had induced the Trustees to give his name to the College over which the subject of this Memoir presided. Mr. Dickinson was now residing in Wilmington, in the state of Delaware, in the enjoyment of the *otium cum dignitate* which became an affluent, enlightened, retired statesman. This visit appears to have been a highly gratifying one on both sides. Mr. Dickinson seems to have retained, what some other members of the original Board of Trustees did not,—a deep sense of the obligation, resulting from their written pledges, in calling Dr. Nisbet from Scotland, to consult, and endeavour to secure, his personal comfort. He, therefore, ever treated him with the most pointed attention and respect. A gentleman who happened to be a witness of the interview and conversation between these two gentlemen, during the first evening after Dr. Nisbet's arrival, gave the writer of these pages an account of it, which was in no small degree interesting.

The conversation on that evening turned on the following subject—"The probable effect of a zealous and ardent prosecution of the study of the physical sciences on the religious character; or, the tendency of a long continued and earnest investigation of the wonders of nature to produce a forgetfulness of the Creator and Governor of the world." In this conversation Dr. Nisbet, as was expected and desired, took the lead. He maintained the position, that unless the grace of God produced a different effect, the more intimately men became acquainted with the works of nature, the less mindful were they

of their great Author. The gentleman who made report of this conversation, represented it as one of the most rich, instructive and interesting intellectual feasts that he ever enjoyed. At the close, Mr. Dickinson said to him—"Doctor, what you have said, would form an invaluable octavo volume. I would give a large sum to have it in that form." He urged his venerable guest to pay him an annual visit. And on Doctor Nisbet's return home, he received notice that Mr. Dickinson had deposited five hundred dollars in one of the Philadelphia banks, subject to his order, for bearing the expence of the future visits which he had solicited. Accordingly, for several years afterwards, he continued to pay an annual visit to Mr. Dickinson, and was always received and treated as might have been expected on the part of one who made a proper estimate of the talents, learning and piety of his guest, and who remembered the solicitations and promises which had allured him from his native land.

These journeys were always made on horseback. The running of public stages between Carlisle and Philadelphia, had then, either not begun, or the establishments were on such an uncomfortable footing, and the roads so bad, that the most eligible mode of travelling, for him, was on the saddle. He preferred it to any other within his reach.

In the year 1793, Dr. Nisbet passed through an ordeal which was in no small degree trying to his feelings, and those of his family. In the progress of what was called the "Whiskey Rebellion,"* in that

* A rebellion in Pennsylvania, occasioned by the tax laid by the government of the United States on the distilling of ardent spirits.

year, which called out the military force of the United States, with Washington at its head, to put it down—the popular excitement at Carlisle was tremendous. On this occasion the subject of the present Memoir concurred with his colleague, Dr. Davidson, in opinion that it was proper to say something from the pulpit adapted to allay the dreadful tumult. Dr. Davidson in the morning, gave a judicious, but modest and mild discourse, which though not very acceptable to the populace, gave but little offence. Dr. Nisbet in the afternoon, spoke out a little more plainly. His text was, 1. Thessalonians, iv. 11. *And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.* In this sermon he endeavoured to show, with much force of reasoning, drawn from Scripture and experience, and not without some significant occasional glances of a satirical kind, that all men were not equally fitted to be Philosophers, Legislators, and Statesmen; but that some were intended for working with their hands. This sermon gave great offence to a portion of the congregation; some of whom remarked, that "*such doctrine* did not suit this side of the Atlantic." Accordingly, a few days afterwards, when the Whiskey insurgents came into Carlisle, from the adjacent country, to erect a Whiskey or Liberty Pole, it was feared, by many, that Dr. Nisbet's house would be violently assailed by the mob. Some respectable friends and neighbours offered to remain in his house for the purpose of defending it, if attacked. He declined however accepting the offer; wisely judging that if such an assemblage were known of,

it might invite attack. The result showed that provision for defence was not wholly unnecessary. The mob were actually and furiously proceeding to the President's house, but were stopped by a friend, who informed them that his younger daughter was lying very ill, and that to attack his dwelling, under such circumstances, would be brutal rather than patriotic. This remonstrance prevailed with the infuriated multitude to retire.

Is it wonderful that this venerable servant of God should have received, from such scenes, impressions of an unfavourable kind concerning the population and institutions of our country? Here was a man eminent for his learning and piety, who had, in his own country, warmly espoused the cause of America in our revolutionary war; who had fearlessly preached and prayed against the measures of his own government in that contest, yet without suffering any violence; who, on coming to a land of boasted freedom, for the simple declaration of his opinions, could scarcely be protected from the lawless ferocity of a mob!

The following extract of a letter addressed by Dr. Nisbet to his old friend, Dr. Witherspoon, December 3, 1793, a few months only before the death of the latter, will give a characteristic view of the state of mind of the writer at that time, and of the aspect of various things in our country:

"The consequences of the yellow fever in Philadelphia, and the reports of its having been in this place, have prevented the return of more than half of our students from the southern States; and I am afraid that some of the students themselves have had

a hand in the affair, and misrepresented the situation of this place, in order to prevail with their parents not to send them back, as their indolence and their aversion to study are inexpressible, and the indulgence that is given them by their parents, is almost boundless. One C—, from North Carolina, who was certified to us as qualified even to teach the ancient languages, (although he was afraid of being examined in them,) and as well acquainted with almost every part of philosophy, is gone, as I fear, to your College, because we would not admit him into the Philosophy class, in the middle of the course, in hopes of obtaining a degree without any examination or further instruction. I wonder that you did not mention him in your letter. But it is probable that he would not mention to you that he had ever been in this place."

"I have been informed that at the College at—— they have no public lessons, and the students are not bound to give attendance at the institution; but that their teachers give them books, from time to time, from which they make extracts, or compose speeches, which they recite when they return to the College; and that the whole of their education is conducted in this manner. If students succeed in this way, I think that they will not be much indebted to the labour of their teachers. But every thing is supposed to be so much improved in the present age, that I should not be surprised to hear of students receiving degrees without any study at all; and the practice at ———, if my intelligence is to be depended on, seems to come very near it."

"I hear that some of the 'friends of the people'

have come over from Scotland this year, and published the most dismal accounts of the situation of that country, which are contrary to all the intelligence that I have from my correspondents. I suppose that you have already heard of the arrival of Dr. Priestley's son in this country, from France, and that his father is expected soon to follow him from England. Is it not somewhat surprising that this young man, who, scarcely a year ago, gave public thanks to the National Assembly of France, for the immense honour they had done him, by adopting him as a French citizen, should have so soon become sick of 'liberty and equality,' and come over to this country, where we have only liberty? But as I hear that the expenses of the new play-house in Philadelphia are not yet defrayed, I am afraid that the Doctor will not find subscribers for building him a place of worship, and paying his salary, unless Congress shall be pleased to vote him a pension, as a French citizen in distress, or to give him a salary for officiating as their chaplain, and should turn this office into a church-dignity in his favour."

"By the way, I have seen the plan of the Federal City, and agree that it resembles the New Jerusalem in one respect; for, as St. John testifies, that 'he saw no temple there;' so I find no plan or place for a church in all that large draught. But I cannot add what he mentions in the next verse, as I believe that our people will be well enough contented with the light of 'Liberty and Equality,' together with that of French lanterns and Atheistical philosophy. You do not mention whether the 'citizen Minister' has been successful in making proselytes for his repub-

lic in the city of New-York; nor whether the generality of the citizens have left off wearing breeches. You ought to have informed me too, as you live so near the source of light and information, whether *wooden shoes* are worn by the majority of the people; whether *soup maigre* is in great request at their tables; and what is the current price of *frogs* in their markets. But it appears that you have too little curiosity with regard to the affairs of your neighbours."

"The subscription by the opposition party in England, of a large subsidy, and a permanent annuity to Mr. Fox, in my opinion, does little honour, either to the givers, or to the receiver. Patriotism seems to have run very low in England, if the people could find no more proper object for their bounty and confidence, than a man who has spent his whole life in the pursuit of wine, women and cards; and who only attended to the affairs of the public in the intervals of his debauchery. A similarity of character in his subscribers may be naturally inferred, from their choosing him as the object of their bounty. Besides, it does little honour to their understanding that they have attempted to limit a professed gambler, and to make his annuity inseparable from his person. As if that could not be staked on a card, as well as any other possession. Accordingly the newswriters pretend that this 'man of the people' has already lost his inseparable annuity at play, to a Scotch Lord, so that he has nothing remaining except the title of 'king of the beggars,' which is likely to be more inseparable from him than his annuity."

About this time his faithful correspondent, Dr. Erskine, was assiduous in keeping him informed

of the various events in Scotland which might be supposed to be interesting to his American friend. Though Dr. E. had many correspondents on this side of the Atlantic, the number which he addressed to Dr. Nisbet is really surprising. Out of many which might be inserted, all of which would be interesting, the following is a small specimen:

"*Edinburgh, August* 12, 1793."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"I received your letters of 30th January, and June 4th, and have not sent you a parcel since the 14th of February last, which I am glad went safely to your hands."

"The Rev. Mr. Dunn, of Kirkintillock, was imprisoned in Edinburgh Tolbooth, for three months. The ground of the sentence was, his cutting some leaves from the minutes of a Society of 'the Friends of the People,' which might have authenticated a charge of sedition against them. But I believe some passages of his Synod Sermon on Rev. xxi. 5, occasioned a severity which to many appeared too great. Some passages of the Sermon were thought to favour sedition; and though, from his explications in other parts, I hope he had no such design, I think he very improperly wrested and misapplied his text. None of the anonymous pamphlets were written by me. That against Mr. Dunn, is generally ascribed to Mr. Moody, of St. Andrew's church. Dr. Porteous, of Glasgow, a keen supporter of the slave trade, and of the measures of our ministry in the war with France, has published a Sermon, Jeremiah vi, 16: *Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways,* &c. which

many think has gone as far to one extreme, as Mr. Dunn's sermon to the other. Both of them are able men, and diligent and useful ministers; and, I believe, prompted in this instance by an honest zeal, the one for reforming things amiss in the constitution or administration of government; and the other for promoting good order, and a just subjection to lawful authority. But the zeal of neither has been, I think, according to knowledge:—and both verify the maxim, that not only *stulti*, but *sapientes dum vitia fugiunt, in contraria currunt.* Indeed *Paine*, and many of the anonymous writers on the same side, have probably—some with design, and some without it—vented sentiments which lead to violent means for essentially altering our constitution, and even to an equalizing of property; and many of the replies, in their loyalty, have forgotten whig principles, and vindicated as necessary government carrying on their measures by bribery and corruption. Dr. Hunter, however, Mr. M'Gill, of Eastwood; and Mr. Somerville, of Jedburgh; have steered clear of these extremes. On the other hand, many, who had no other design, have been unjustly branded as friends of sedition, especially by those who belong to the moderate party. Mr. Thompson, of Ochiltree, and Mr. Davidson, of Dundee, are instances of this; of whom ill-natured calumnies have been invented and spread, and found too ready a belief from those whose distance and circumstances did not allow them to examine the change."

"I know not how this war is more unpopular than that with America was, though administration plead necessity, as France, when pretending friend-

ship, by secret emissaries, was encouraging disaffection and rebellion. Yet this notwithstanding, though many disapprove particular measures of government, our enemies are much mistaken, if they flatter themselves that we wish to get rid of our king and constitution. There are some such among us; but their numbers, rank, character and influence are not alarming. It is fortunate for the interest of religion, that some, unjustly termed 'the wild Clergy,' were the earliest to warn against and reprove the riots of 1792; and that Palmer, the head of all the professed Socinians here, is thought to have been active in spreading seditious papers."

"You have, no doubt, heard of my colleague, Dr. Robertson's death. Our opposite sentiments and conduct as to Church policy, and the late American war, did not hinder our mutual regard. He endured, for six weeks before his death, violent pain, with much fortitude and resignation. He was no friend to the Ayrshire doctrines as to the divinity and Atonement of Christ; and I have reason to think our sentiments as to the present posture of affairs, were much the same. The Sabbath after his burial I preached two sermons; the first on 1 Peter, i. 12 — 15; and the second on 1 Chronicles xxix. 12: *In thine hand is to make great*—which I have been much urged to publish; though publishing the first is impossible, as nothing of it was written, except what related to my colleague's character. Mr. Baird, who has been only nine months a minister of Edinburgh, succeeds him as Principal of the University. His diligence in public and private ministerial duties, persuade me that he will do no dishonour to that

office; although those who wished it for the aged Dr. Blair, or the eloquent Dr. Hardie, make a great outcry against Provost Elder, for doing for his son-in-law what, perhaps, in a similar case, they would have done for theirs."

"I herewith send you a small bundle of books, chiefly German periodicals."

"I find that the observation which I ascribed to Mr. Nathaniel Mather, was indeed the observation of Mr. Samuel Mather. You will find it in Dr. Cotton Mather's *Magnalia*, Book IV. p. 152. With best compliments to Mrs. Nisbet and your family, in which my wife and family join,"

"I am, dear Sir,"

"Yours, affectionately,"

"JOHN ERSKINE."

"*Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

From the same.

"*Edinburgh, July* 24, 1797."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"Four days ago, I wrote you a hasty line, which was all that my time then allowed, being much occupied by my 'Sketches,' vol. ii. I was favoured the day after with yours of May 22d. My parcel to you goes under cover to Mr. Samuel Campbell, by a ship from Leith for New York. I send this letter by another hand, in the same ship, that it may go by post from New York, and inform you of the parcel."

"The ignorance of Church history, and especially of the Church history of the present century, appears to me very deplorable, and to mislead many well-meaning men. My second volume is almost con-

fined to the modern history of Popery; and, I think, shows that, though Louis XVI. and the unfortunate King of Poland, were of tolerant principles, and the Emperors Joseph and Leopold not only friends to liberty of conscience, but promoters of the reformation of some of the greatest abuses of Popery; yet that the absurdities, idolatries, superstitions, and persecuting spirit of a great part of the Popish Church, remain the same. I think I have also given some reasons in opposition to the Seceders and others, who think as ill of Popery as I do, that the extremes of atheism, of infidelity, and of a levelling, anarchical spirit, when the evils engendered by them are for a time felt, will stimulate men to fly from them to the opposite evils of arbitrary power and superstition, being ignorant of the true cure in genuine Christianity."

"The bad effects of the revolution in Holland will not, I suppose, immediately appear; as many of the worthiest ministers there continue to be supported by their wealthy hearers, and continue to preach and to write as formerly on the great doctrines and duties of Christianity. But as no clergymen are to be paid by the state, if (which appears to me probable from the speeches which are published) private donations to religious purposes are to be considered as sacred, the consequence will be the Roman Catholics in Holland will return to the possession of the many legacies and endowments made in their favour before the Reformation; and, consequently, will be able to maintain their clergy at less expense, which must tempt covetous worshippers, of little conscience, at once to go over to their communion."

"The Rev. Dr. Peirson, minister of the English church at Amsterdam, has been one of the greatest sufferers by the revolution. Apprehending it, he had sent on board an English ship silver plate, jewels, &c. belonging to his wife, and very valuable furniture, worth nearly £1400 sterling, which was seized in the Texel, by De Winter, then in the French service, and now the Prince of Orange's successor as Admiral of Holland. De Winter did not report the capture to the French commissaries. His roguery and meanness were condemned; but the Doctor could procure no restitution. On the first day of June, 1795, it was moved in the Classis at Amsterdam, to congratulate the municipality of that city on the treaty between France and Holland. The Doctor opposed the motion, and said, that the day of signing that treaty appeared to him the most sad and dismal day Holland had ever seen. The motion was over ruled by a majority of two votes, which discouraged attempts at procuring such congratulations from other classes. The rulers were amazed at the Doctor, and became more so on his refusing a declaration, when summoned before the municipality on account of that speech, of submission to the new government, and that he never would do any thing for re-establishing the Stadholder. This he thought he could not do without renouncing his allegiance to his native sovereign, and leaguing himself with the king's enemies. On the 14th of July, 1795, the municipality suspended him from his office and benefice, worth about £200 sterling; and on the 20th of July they dismissed him from his office, and prohibited his leaving Amsterdam without the con-

sent of the Committee of Vigilance, whom they appointed to keep a watchful eye over him. For a year and nine months he was thus under arrest, in his own house, and spies employed to watch his motions. This year, on the 14th April, the Committee of Vigilance forced him thence, and put him in prison, none having access to him except the jailor and his servants; he and his lady not being allowed even to write to each other without their inspection. The first ten days, she was not allowed to send him any victuals. On the 27th of April, they delivered him up to the Committee of Justice. Both friends and foes exclaimed against these proceedings. It is believed that nothing criminal can be found against him; and he says, with firmness, the motto of arms shall be 'death rather than disloyalty.' I have heard of no later accounts of him than those bearing date the 15th of May last. He got a good deal of money with his lady; and his losses are supposed to amount to £2500 sterling; and it is supposed that the expenses of lawyers, &c. may amount to several hundred pounds more. When so much has been done for French emigrants, I hope our administration will not neglect a native of Britain, who, for his attachment to his king and the Prince of Orange, expressed, perhaps, with more honesty than prudence, has suffered so severely. As these things have not appeared in our prints, and probably will not in yours, I have given them thus fully."

"I will mention another and more agreeable anecdote, which I had from a friend near London, to whom it was related by one who had it in that city from the Polish General, *Kosciusko*. The Empe-

ror Paul came to him in prison, incog. After inquiring about his health, he asked the General if he wished to be set at liberty? The answer was, 'certainly, but I know not how to obtain it.' The visitor replied—'I have some interest at court, and if you will tell me what you would do if you had your liberty, I will use it in your behalf.' The General replied—'I would go to America.' On which, the unknown visitor said—'I am Paul, the Russian Emperor; my mother is now dead; and you are this moment at liberty to go where you please. I shall order £8000 to bear your expenses to America.' My correspondent says, he has a pension there, and will get any quantity of land he can reasonably ask. He has a most painful and disabling wound in his thigh, so that he cannot walk. As soon as he came to London, Waronzoff, the Russian Ambassador, no doubt by order of his generous master, waited on him, showed him the utmost respect, and asked him if he would permit him to send his physician to him? The general consented; and the ambassador sent his physician, who took with him some other physicians and skilful surgeons, who thought it would require two or three years for him to recover strength in his limb; but that he would be always lame. The American consul at Bristol took the general from the hotel, and entertained him at his own expense until he embarked for America. By accounts, both from London and Bristol, he is a most modest and unassuming man."

"As ships sometimes sail from Philadelphia, and more frequently from New York, for Scotland, when you have an opportunity, write by Mr. Ebenezer

Hazard, Philadelphia, or Mr. John Thompson, New York, merchant in Queen street, and every thing you commit to them will be correctly forwarded."

"I was confined about ten weeks, the end of the last and beginning of the present year, but since have preached as usual. My wife has had no return of dangerous distress, but has had, for four months, rheumatic pains, which have prevented her visiting and being out at night, but have not hindered her going to church, and sometimes taking an airing in a chaise. I am, dear sir, yours, affectionately,"

"JOHN ERSKINE."

"*Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

"P. S. Dr. Snodgrass, of Paisley, died last month."

From the same.

"*Lauriston, October 2d*, 1797."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"I chuse not to write what you will see as early, if not more so, from the public prints. The following anecdote may not be disagreeable:"

"The Stadtholder and suite were expected at Colchester, on their flight from Holland, late on Friday night. Mr. Sterry, a worthy clergyman there, sent word to the proper quarter, that he would gladly give the best accommodations in his power to some of them. Accordingly, M. De Lorry, and one or two more, came to Mr. Sterry's house, near 12 o'clock at night; and as they had hardly slept any for the six preceding nights, requested to be immediately put to bed. In the morning they signified their inclination in every thing to conform to the

usages of the family; attended family worship; and breakfasted with them; Mr. S. desiring them to send for their servants, and, while the Prince remained in Colchester, to use all the freedom in his house they would in their own. On Saturday Mr. Sterry was introduced to the Stadtholder, and expressed his concern for the occasion of his visiting England, and his thankfulness that God had preserved his highness in the danger to which he was exposed. The Prince received him with great cordiality; signified that he would be his hearer on the next day; and requested the loan of a prayer-book, that he might previously read the prayers and lessons of the day. On the Sabbath, Mr. Sterry preached from 1 Chron. xx. 12, and first viewed sin as the cause of all calamities and danger; and lastly, the proper consolation under such circumstances. The Prince stood during the whole of the sermon, and discovered the most serious attention. M De Lorry told Mr. S. that the Prince was well acquainted with his Bible, and followed a plan and order by which he generally read it through thrice every year. On Monday Mr. Sterry waited on the Prince before his departure, who thanked him for his hospitality to the gentlemen of his suite, and signified the pleasure with which he had, on the preceding day, heard his reasonable and useful discourse. One of the gentlemen in the Prince's suite had been, on some occasion, in the French army, under Pichegru, where he observed an order and subordination much superior to that in the armies of the allies and emigrants: and he understood this strict order had been established by near

2000 men being shot, for plundering and other crimes."

"Some very able and pious Missionaries have been sent to different parts, from the various societies in England and Scotland. Mr. Clark, at Sierra Leone, whose labours were so much blessed in this city, to a Sunday morning school, and to boarding schools, where he occasionally exhorted, united zeal with prudence; and there are now promising appearances of his usefulness. A Dr. Vanderkemp, from Holland, studied medicine in Edinburgh more than twenty years ago, and published an uncommonly able and ingenious Thesis. Afterwards, he made a great figure, first in the medical line, and subsequently as an officer in the Dutch army. But all this while he was a thorough sceptic, or rather despiser of Christianity. On a fair and promising day, he, his lady, and his only child, went on a pleasure party on the water. A sudden water-spout overturned the boat; his lady and child perished; and he was preserved in a manner next to miraculous, by a boat from the land being driven to the place where he was about to sink. This deliverance, however, made no saving impression on his mind. But on a certain occasion worldly motives led him, notwithstanding his unbelief, to attend and partake of the Lord's Supper. A deep conviction of guilt was made upon his mind, and his heart was soon opened to the King of glory. He immediately determined to devote himself to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom; and being warmly recommended by some worthy Dutch ministers, he has offered himself to the London Missionary

Society, to go as a Missionary whithersoever they may think proper to send him."*

"I am sorry that some members of our Edinburgh Missionary Society have made excursions, especially to the North and West, and preached without ordination. I hope you have received my letter and 'Sketches,' the first sent in July. When you have an opportunity to write by a ship from New-York, Mr. Cornelius Davis, bookseller, or Mr. John Thompson, merchant there, will be safe channels of conveyance. I am, dear sir, affectionately yours,"

"J. ERSKINE."

"*Rev. Dr. Nisbet.*"

From the same.

"*Lauriston, Aug.* 6, 1799."

"*Rev. and Dear Sir,*"

"The last letter I had from you was dated the 1st of February. My last letter and parcel were sent on the 10th of May last."

"Notwithstanding the late successes of our allies in Switzerland, Italy and Egypt, the junction of the French and Spanish fleets appears to me an alarming event, which I fear is little laid to heart. Whether they are intended for the East Indies, for Britain, or for Ireland, if providence prevent our fleet from meeting them, or giving them a stroke, the consequences may prove most fatal. The religious state of our country is still more alarming. Though our gentry generally cry out against French principles,

* Dr. Vanderkemp was sent to South Africa, and was, for a number of years, a devoted and successful Missionary in that interesting station.

their manner of spending the Sabbath makes their sincerity doubtful. The peculiar doctrines of the Gospel are seldom preached upon by some who do not directly oppose them; or, if mentioned at all, are expressed in cold and ambiguous language. Many in the lowest ranks are tinctured with infidelity. Mr. Robert Haldane, of Airthrie, who, some years ago, broached anti-monarchical tenets, has formed a new sect, and applied considerable sums for carrying on their designs, a full account of which they, very prudently, have not published. His brother, at first a lay-preacher, but now ordained, and Mr. Ewing, who lately renounced his connexion with the Church of Scotland, now profess the Tory creed of passive obedience and non-resistance. They bring a succession of ministers from England, who, on Sabbaths, preach in the circus, or itinerate through various parts of Scotland, for five or six weeks, and then return home. Their professed object is, to carry the pure gospel to those parts of the country which are most in want of it. Yet their chief efforts have been directed to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Dundee, and other places blessed with faithful ministers, of different denominations; and their adherents are chiefly gained from some of the most sound and able, whom they, or the strangers they employ, insinuate are cold-hearted, because they give not their countenance to lay-preaching, and other irregularities. I am sorry that some who hourly declaim against these men, promote the growth of their party, both by an unpopular manner of preaching, and by pushing with success some late measures in our General Assemblies;

for example—laying difficulties and restrictions on new Chapels of Ease, which are like to drive many from our Church;—an act last May, declaring it against the constitution of our Church to admit any into our pulpits who have not been licensed and ordained by her Presbyteries;—and a warning then very properly emitted, against the circus people; but which has much defeated its own design, by a vague charge against them, as entertaining designs hostile to civil government. For though there may be suspicions against some of them, they amount not to conclusive evidence. Had only the evil tendency of their party been asserted, this might have been easily proved, not only by the jealousies and divisions which they have excited among men whose union in the present crisis was important; but by some of the ablest of them maintaining that even defensive war is unlawful, which must check all effectual opposition to a French invasion."

"We have agreeable accounts that Dr. Vanderkemp has been well received at the Cape of Good Hope, and is soon to enter on his mission. In his voyage, he was the means of preventing, by his persuasion, the execution of the conspiracy for murdering the captain and sailors, and delivering the ship to the French; and also of converting several of the convicts, who were on their way to Botany Bay. But I am sorry to add, accounts received this day make it probable that the ship Duff has been captured in her second missionary voyage; though our enemies, on learning her destination, have set the missionaries at liberty."

"I send herewith a small parcel of books, of which I beg your acceptance; and am, as ever,

"Affectionately, yours,"

"JOHN ERSKINE."

In 1795, Dr. Nisbet's youngest daughter, Alison, was married to Dr. Samuel M'Coskry, an eminent physician, residing in Carlisle. By him she had a number of children, several of whom still survive. Of these notice will be taken hereafter. This matrimonial connection of a second member of his family formed another tie binding the Doctor to his adopted country, and precluding all thought of a return to Scotland.

The light in which Doctor Nisbet regarded the French revolution, was alluded to in a preceding chapter. Every reader will recollect that the period covered by the dates of the foregoing letters, was precisely that which presented the most thrilling and revolting scenes of that great national catastrophe. From the first, he regarded it not only with suspicion, but with fixed aversion, and even abhorrence. He considered it, from the outset, as originating with the infidel philosophers of France, for the overthrow of religion and of all government. He was accustomed to remark, that, many years before the revolution commenced, he had discovered the seeds of it vegetating and springing up in a variety of forms, and all indicating the exploding and destructive materials that were at work. He remarked, that even in such an article as the French fans, and other similar manufactures imported from that country years before, it was easy to discover the presence

of principles and feelings at war with all morality and all order.

It is well known that at the commencement of the French revolution, and even after it had made considerable progress, a large portion of the friends of civil and religious liberty in the United States regarded it with a favourable eye. Recollecting the friendly aid yielded to us by France in the course of our revolutionary contest; and considering that nation as engaged in a struggle, very similar to our own, against oppression, multitudes of our citizens not only wished well to what they deemed an effort to establish republicanism in France, but were strongly disposed to make common cause with her in her war with England. This, it is well known, gave rise to much diversity of opinion in our country; excited the most ardent party feelings; and agitated the nation in a most distressing and alarming manner for a number of years.

In this period of painful agitation, Doctor Nisbet could not think it his duty to conceal either his opinions or his feelings. He expressed both from time to time, with candour and freedom. And although he resided in a State which was greatly torn by party conflicts on this occasion, and occupied an office which some considered as dictating a cautious reserve on such a subject, his characteristic honesty would not allow him to take such a course. He spoke freely and openly in private and in public, and bore a decisive testimony against what he deemed a system of infidel profligacy and crime, under the guise of a love of liberty. In addressing the students of the college, as their official instructor and

guide, and even on some public occasions, he warned his hearers against the impiety and the enormous cruelty and licentiousness exhibited on a theatre from which every channel of intelligence brought the most revolting and heart-rending accounts of bloodshed, and every species of inhuman and anti-christian practice. This freedom of censure, of course, gave offence to the advocates of the French party, as they were familiarly called; and, perhaps, deterred some parents from sending their sons to the College over which he presided. Violent politicians represented him as an enemy to civil and religious liberty; and inferred, that he who thought unfavourably of the French revolution, must have been equally unfriendly to that revolution which gave independence to our own country. It was in vain that he appealed to his uniform course in favour of America, and in opposition to the war waged against us by the British government, before he came to our country. It was in vain that he urged the utter dissimilarity of the struggle in France to that which gave freedom to the United States. He insisted, that the American revolution was commenced on just and solid grounds; was carried on by honest, enlightened, noble-minded patriots; was prompted by a sincere love of rational liberty; and established on a basis which sound political and religious principles equally approved. While it was, in his opinion, notorious that, although there had long been in France grievious oppressions and abuses, which needed correction; yet that the revolution in that country, so far as its leaders were concerned, was begun in Atheism; continually actuated, not by pa-

triotism, but by a hatred of all religion; by the basest selfishness, and by that savage disregard of all moral obligation, and all sober government, which at once disgraced and defeated their professed object of pursuit.

Under these painful impressions, no wonder that he allowed himself to speak on this subject in terms of the strongest detestation. The following anecdote, while it may amuse the reader, will serve at once to illustrate and confirm our representation of his feelings. Sometime about the year 1794, when he happened to be in Philadelphia, a gentleman of his acquaintance said to him—"Well, Doctor, what are we to think of the French Revolution now?" "Indeed, man," said he,—"I can give you a better account of that matter now than ever before. What I am about to tell you is no fable, but a fact that really happened in my neighbourhood lately. A poor old woman, who is no politician, but a plain, serious body, who had been for some time in a gloomy state of mind, anxious about the salvation of her soul, (a thing, by the way, that no politician ever thinks of,) dreamed that she died, and went to the bad place. It seemed to her like a great inclosure, surrounded by a high, massy wall. She knocked at the door, when who should open it but his Satanic Majesty himself. The old woman expressed her surprise that he should stoop to such an office, and her wonder that he had not sent one of his imps or understrappers to open the door. 'Indeed, good woman,' said he, 'the devil an imp or understrapper have I left in all my dominions. Hell is completely empty.

They have all gone to help on the cause of liberty and equality in France."

It is hardly necessary to say, that such language was deeply revolting to many. It was often made matter of heavy complaint. Still, although this venerable man continued, while he lived, to endure the suspicions, and even, in some cases, to be loaded with the abuse, of violent demagogues; yet such was his established character for integrity, benevolence and ardent piety, that even the violence of party spirit was disarmed, and all regarded him with real veneration, as an honest, Christian patriot. And even many of those who once disapproved of his sentiments, and who hesitated about committing their sons to his tuition, lived to see the time, (though, with regard to many of them, *he* did not live to see it,) when they were constrained to acknowledge, that his judgment on this subject was more sound than their own, and his prediction of the result, more in accordance with the actual catastrophe of that awful drama.

Candour seems to require from the author of this Memoir the acknowledgment, that the last remark applies in some measure to himself. He was among the thousands of his countrymen who regarded the French Revolution, in its early stages, with a favourable eye, as the triumph of the spirit of liberty over misrule and oppression; and as promising, notwithstanding all the crime and bloodshed with which it was attended, the ultimate reign of freedom and good government. Such were the hopes which he once entertained; and to which, almost without hope, he clung, long after every truly favourable aspect had

vanished. During this period he maintained an interesting and delightful correspondence with the venerated Friend, whose memory it is now his privilege and his pleasure to endeavour to embalm. In the course of this correspondence that friend poured out his whole heart with the freedom of a father to a son. He frequently, indeed, uttered sentiments in reference to the French Revolution which the present writer could not *then* adopt, and some to which he is constrained *yet* to demur. But never did he pen a line which impaired the writer's confidence in his piety, his benevolence, or his genuine Christian patriotism. Never did the writer suffer, for a moment, this honest, candid expression of his correspondent's feelings, to impair his deep veneration. And, in the end, he was constrained to say, with regard to most of the points then in discussion, that his venerable friend was more sagacious and wise than himself. And if that friend was sometimes driven by the enormities of French anarchy, and by the real anomalies and excesses of American democracy, to express sentiments which sometimes appeared to militate with the principles of true republican freedom, no one who knew how to appreciate sterling integrity, and pre-eminent worth, could regard them in any other light than as venial mistakes arising from the extreme sensibility of a great and good man. The truth is, no one who remembers the course of events in the United States, during the nineteen years from 1785, when Doctor Nisbet became an American citizen, until 1804, when he died, will find the least difficulty in understanding why a steady friend to the rights and happiness of man

should sometimes utter language manifesting painful disappointment with regard to the past, and deep apprehension with respect to the future.

The following letter from Dr. Nisbet to the author of this Memoir, is a specimen of the intercourse which subsisted between them in that trying and agitating period of our country's history.

"*Carlisle, July* 6, 1798."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"I have not had the pleasure of hearing from you for a long time; and in my visit to Philadelphia in May last, did not find you there occasionally, as I had done sometimes before. I had resolved to visit New York, but found it impracticable. I had suspected that some coldness had taken place on your part, from I know not what cause, as I am not conscious of having given any occasion for it. I cannot persuade myself that the free communication of my sentiments would have given you offence, nor that you should have taken to yourself any thing that I have said of American *sans culottes.* I can assure you that it was merely in jest that I addressed you in that character; and if I had not thought that you were a sincere friend to the government under which you live, I should have had no desire to correspond with you.* I acknowledged my obligation to you for getting my box of newspapers and pamphlets out of the Custom-house, but never heard whether you received my letter."

"So great a change of sentiment has taken place

* The Doctor's suspicions were wholly groundless. The remotest thought of offence had not been entertained.

among our citizens, in appearance at least, since my last letter, that I think I may now write you with some confidence, as one of the majority, without fearing to give you offence. The immense reverence which our citizens had for the terrible Republic, is beginning to abate, and some of them even begin to suspect that Talleyrand might possibly be in the wrong, when he demanded only the small sum of twenty five millions of dollars from us by way of tribute; though others affect to wonder that he asked so little. They say that the French are still willing to be on friendly terms with us. Now as friendly communication consists in giving and receiving, when they found us averse to giving, they endeavour to try our friendship in the way of receiving, having lately made us a present of 700 *sans culottes*, including 300 negroes and mulattoes, of equal value with the rest. You might have heard that nine vessels, laden with these precious commodities, are now at Philadelphia, and that twenty-nine other vessels, no less richly laden, are soon expected there. We hear, likewise, that some vessels are gone to New-York: though perhaps your aristocratic Governor may not be willing to receive them, especially if their number is less than that of those who are sent to this state. But *we* are happy in having a Governor wholly devoted to the *sans culotte* interest, who, though he scruples to receive the negroes and mulattoes, on account of the law against the importation of slaves, yet has no objection to receive the French citizens, as those that we have got already have not been so diligent in burning our towns, and revolutionizing our citizens as the Directory had reason to

expect. But as Congress have taken the business into their hands, it is to be feared that they may declare against all communication with the French, either in the way of giving or receiving. And if this is the case, how shall B— receive his pension? What will become of J—, and G—, and G—, and all those who depend on the bounty of the terrible Republic?"

"Your democrats will, no doubt, be glad that M. Genet has received a large packet from the Directory, which will be a seasonable supply to them after the great expenses they must have incurred by celebrating the successes of the terrible Republic. Do you know whether he makes his distribution at his country seat on Long Island, or in the hall of the democratic society in your city? I hear that New York has been affected, though very moderately, with that change of opinion which has taken place in this state; though I believe that many of our new converts are not sincere. We are impatient to hear of the invasion of England; but that project is now said to be laid aside, which must occasion great sorrow to our democratic societies. If our government is able to prevent our citizens from trading to the West Indies, the French might probably be soon starved out of those islands; but as we hear that many American citizens are found on board those privateers which are destroying our trade, it is probable that those of the same disposition, who remain at home, may be no less diligent in supplying the French with provisions; and we hear that some lately supplied them with arms and ammunition. We are really a divided people, as Talleyrand says; though I hope not so

much divided as he supposes. If our government had the courage to seize and hang some of those miscreants who rob their countrymen, it might, perhaps, be a terror to the rest."

"We have heard nothing, as yet, of the success of our armed ships. The French have done their utmost to intimidate our seamen, by declaring that they will give no quarter to such as make any resistance to the terrible Republic. Who would have expected to live to see the Pope become the poorest clergyman in Christendom? Yet this is the case at present. Had it happened in the reign of Ganganelli, who was a Franciscan, it would have been much less calamitous, as it would have only given him an opportunity of performing his vow of poverty, which he had taken in entering into that order. Some are weak enough to think that Popery is at an end, by this misfortune of the Pope: but Popery exists in the minds of men, and exists not in the pockets of the Popes, or in the walls of Rome."

"I long to hear that the French army has turned against the Directory, and that their new conquests have revolted, as I suppose this must happen some time or other; and until that infernal republic is overturned, I see no prospect of peace for America, or the rest of the world. It is happy for us that the ports of France are blockaded up by the British fleets, though many of our wise citizens would wish that those fleets which are our present protection, were sunk in the ocean. You must have read Professor Robison's 'Proofs of a Conspiracy.' It might have been entitled 'Satan's Invisible World Discovered;' as it lays open a scene of villany worthy of

that great philosopher, and calculated for extending his dominions over all the world. I know that some of our *sans culottes* affect to treat it as a work of mere imagination, though the facts related in it are clothed with complete historical evidence. Perhaps they may say the same thing of the account of the behaviour of the French in Suabia, which has been lately published: but facts cannot be put out of existence by reasonings, nor erased from the records of time, in order to save the reputation of republican soldiers. If an account of all the enormities committed by the French in sundry parts of Europe, could be collected, it would compose the most shocking volume in all the history of mankind. Yet there are not a few among us, who wish to see them in this country, and who hope, by their assistance, to regenerate, that is, to overturn the federal government."

"I shall be happy to hear from you with your convenience, and to be assured that I have given you no offence; being, my dear sir,"

"With much regard,"

"Your sincere friend,"

"CHARLES NISBET."

"*Rev. Dr. Miller, New York.*"

After perusing the foregoing remarks and letter, the following letter, to a venerated friend in Scotland, will not surprise the reader:

"To the Rev. Dr. Paton, Craig, near Montrose, North Britain."

"*Carlisle, October* 10*th*, 1799."

"*Rev. and dear Sir,*"

"I was favoured with yours of the 23d of July, a

few days ago. I answered that of March 12th, soon after I received it. I have reason to be thankful that I and my wife and family are still in pretty good health. Though the yellow fever is raging in Philadelphia and New York, this season has been with us very healthy. It is long before we can hear of the transactions of Europe. We are impatient to hear of the success of the secret expedition from England,—the fate of the French fleet,—and that of Buonaparte's army in Syria, as well as of the issue of the 'infernal' commotion in Paris. The success of the Russians in Italy, and of the Austrians in Switzerland, leads us to hope that that great nest of vipers which has so long plagued France, and all Europe, will soon be crushed. But you will have the satisfaction of hearing it long before us. I am sorry for the consequences of restraining the missionaries, and the erection of a new society of Dissenters among you.* Being hindered from preaching to the heathen abroad, they have revenged themselves by preaching it to the heathen at home, of whom no doubt you have not a few. And though this may be called preaching Christ out of strife and envy, yet your General Assembly have shown a spirit directly opposite to that of the Apostle Paul, who tells us that he rejoiced on an occasion of the like nature; whereas they have been so far from rejoicing, that they have got into a violent passion against the missionaries, and forbid their members to encourage them, or to employ them, by which means they have erected a new sect of

* There is here a reference to obstacles thrown in the way of missionaries in the east, by the British government, together with the consequences of these prohibitory acts.

Dissenters, who will naturally associate with the enemies of government, after having been so ill treated by it."

"When Mr. Whitefield itinerated in Scotland, some ministers employed him, and others not; but when an overture was brought in to inhibit them from employing him, the Assembly wisely rejected it, and declared that the employing or not employing Mr. Whitefield, should not be made a term of communion; by which moderate conduct, no schism took place. How wise would it have been to have imitated this conduct on the present occasion! Soon after, Mr. Whitefield came over to America; but our clergy at that time not being so wise as yours, those who employed him broke off all connection with those who did not, and these with the others; by which folly, a schism took place in the Presbyterian body, which was scarcely at an end when I arrived in this country. But your General Assembly have chosen to imitate the folly of this latter course, rather than the wisdom of their own predecessors. I have never heard of any measure of the British government since the Revolution, that even resembled persecution; but this violent proceeding of Henry Dundas amounts to persecution in the most gross and criminal sense of the word. Mr. Dundas is like the dog in the manger, in the Fable of Æsop, as he will neither profit by the Gospel himself, nor suffer others to profit by it, if he can hinder them. Such conduct was never heard of in any other Christian country. The Roman Catholics have been commended even by Protestant writers for their diligence in propagating their religion in Heathen and

Mahommedan countries. But no Roman Catholic missionary was ever prohibited, either by any Pope or Roman Catholic Prince, from visiting any country whatever with the view of propagating the Christian religion; far less did they ever attempt to exclude them from any part of their own dominions. Such cruelty and absurdity seem to have been reserved for Protestant governments; and I am sorry that the only instance of it should have been found in the government of Great Britain. The Assembly ought rather to have petitioned government to permit the emigration of these innocent ecclesiastics, and endeavoured to convince them that the Gospel was never reckoned a contraband commodity by any Christian nation, nor supposed to have a tendency to produce any harm to society: that if government did not think these missionaries the fittest persons for propagating the Christian religion, the design, at least, was laudable, and their zeal might evaporate, not only innocently, but profitably in India; whereas if it were violently restrained, it might produce a convulsion that might endanger both Church and State, as has actually been the case. The Missionaries must know that they have been unjustly and cruelly treated by government, and they must feel the indignity of being the only persons that are oppressed in a free nation. And can it be expected that they will be friends to that government which has made them the only victims of its injustice? The Roman Catholic clergy of France were kindly received and supported, and permitted to propagate their religion in England; but it seems that Protestant clergymen are dangerous persons, and not fit to be tolerated even

in a heathen country! Such persecution may be expected to draw down the vengeance of heaven on the government that is guilty of it; and I confess I am more apprehensive for the fate of Great Britain, on account of this unexampled persecution, than from all the armaments of the French, and all the plots of revolutionists and reformers."

"But while I say this, I do not commend the conduct of the Missionaries. They ought rather to have gone to the East Indies by way of Cape Horn, or through Turkey and Persia, than to have encouraged division, and kindled the torch of discord in their native country."

"Unius ob noxam et furias Henrici Dundas."

"But in this case there seems to have been a strife betwixt the Missionaries, Henry Dundas, and the General Assembly, which of them should show themselves the greatest fools. And, in the competition, the General Assembly, who had the example of the others before them, are, undoubtedly, entitled to the preference."

"I have not yet seen Dr. Erskine's Sermons; but I suppose that they are in a parcel which he informs me that he had sent, but which I have not yet received. I congratulate you on your new church, and think that, excepting its size, it will be better filled by an old minister, such as you, than by many of those who have lately come up. Your heritors ought to give you an assistant after so long an incumbency; but generosity to ministers is none of the vices of the present age. When the inhabitants are once

assembled in their winter quarters, I shall direct inquiry to be made for the person you mention, though it is very difficult and often impossible to discover emigrants in a country, where few people continue any time in the same place. The summer has been very hot and dry in this country, though the heat did not set in early. The springs were mostly dried, and the grass and hay consumed by the grasshoppers, before the sun could burn it up; and the cattle would have perished for want, if we had not got plentiful rains in the end of August, and the beginning of September, which produced a new crop of grass. The wheat crops were scanty, and the potatoes, indian corn, and buckwheat, were almost totally ruined by the drought. Our vessels are daily taken and plundered by the French; but our citizens do not complain, as they say the French are their friends. But when any of them are taken by the English, with French or Spanish property aboard, they cry out bitterly, and set no bounds to their resentment. We are a weak, foolish, and divided people; and nothing prevents our being subdued by the French, but that the English fleet keeps them at home, and gives them full employment. But we are so far from being thankful to them for this service, that they are the constant objects of the imprecations of the *sans culotte* party among us. A republic is often said to be the cheapest form of government; but if we consider the frequency and expense of elections, it may be said to be the dearest of all. This year, we have an election of a Governor; and I believe it will cost this State more than half a million of dollars, by the mere interruption of business, and, perhaps, a great-

er sum in drink, canvassing, and distributing handbills. But this is not all. The king of Spain, whose ambassador here is son-in-law to the democratic candidate for Governor, is supposed to have expended a greater sum still in private donations to demagogues and agents, for procuring votes, which will be charged for secret services."

"If your people were wise, they would see that the right of universal suffrage, which they so foolishly contend for, is a nuisance and not a blessing, as it reduces elections to a mere lottery, in which demagogues have the disposal of the prizes, and ninety-nine parts in a hundred of the electors know nothing of either of the candidates, and often care as little. We are not yet certain that the democratic candidate for governor is chosen, as the election was only on the 8th instant, and all the votes in the different counties must be sent to the capital and numbered before the successful candidate can be declared. But as he had aids to which the other candidate had nothing to oppose, it is considered as almost certain that he will have the majority."

"The Millennium has been of late a subject of speculation here. Some of our ignorant clergy have imagined that it began with the French Revolution! But it is strange that the reign of Atheism should be called the reign of Christ. A minister in New Jersey lost his senses by studying the prophecies respecting the Millennium, or rather by endeavouring to reconcile it to his own notions. After having set a day for its commencement, and being disappointed, he turned Anabaptist, and re-baptised some of his congregation, who were as mad as himself. In a

little while he turned Episcopalian; and soon afterwards he expended an ample patrimony of his own, and all that he could collect from his friends, in erecting immense buildings, for stowing the goods and money of the Jewish nation, which he imagined they were to leave in his custody, while they were to proceed, poor and penniless, to take possession of the land of Canaan. It is plain that he knew nothing of Jews when he imagined that they were to leave their money and goods behind them; though, if they expected to be restored by Buonaparte, that would have been a very wise measure, as *he* would have immediately confiscated them for the benefit of the 'great nation.' But this reverie took place long before the expedition to Egypt. Enthusiasm and Infidelity seem mutually to produce each other. I have just now been reading a German newspaper, published at York, in this neighbourhood, wherein it is asserted that Buonaparte is the Saviour mentioned in Isaiah xix. 20; that *Bonnier* and *Roberjot* are the 'two witnesses' mentioned in the Revelation, and the two olive trees in Zechariah, as being ministers of peace. And I was lately assured by a clergyman of credit, that a distinguished Physician of Philadelphia had given it as his opinion, that the expedition of Buonaparte into Syria was to be understood by the 'high way out of Egypt into Assyria,' Isaiah xix. 23. Dr. Bryce Johnston's commentary on the Revelation is the best that I have met with; though the Millennium is still, and ought to be, as long as it is future, involved in obscurity."

"The Socinian and anarchical publications in England and Germany, seem to be more prejudicial

to religion than direct infidelity, as they seduce many to renounce Christianity before they are aware of it. Buonaparte's adventures seem to be almost at an end by the defeat at St. John D'Acre, and Sir Sidney Smith has had a noble opportunity of being revenged on the French, for the cruel usage he met with when a prisoner among them. It is manifest that the French despair of Buonaparte's success, by their having denounced those who sent him on his anti-Crusade, and by their sending him no reinforcements. Italy seems to be once more free, as we expect soon to hear that the French are driven from Geneva; and the deliverance of Switzerland may, perhaps, be as sudden as its conquest. When will men be at peace with one another? The eighteenth century seems to go out very bloody and threatening, and God only knows how the nineteenth is to set in."

"I am rather uneasy at the rendezvous of the French and Spanish fleets at Brest; though it announces their complete disappointment with respect to their interests in Italy and Egypt. It is too near England and Ireland to be beheld without concern. As in the American war, the combined fleets only played at bo-peep with the English, and returned, without doing mischief, to their native shores, I have hopes that the same will be the case at present, especially as they were both stronger and more united than they can be now. Yet till they are disposed of, or driven away with disgrace, I am not without apprehension for Great Britain. There are still many traitors and malcontents in all the three kingdoms; so that perhaps Henry Dundas may not find it so easy to keep the French out of England, as to keep

the missionaries out of India. But I hope for better things. We are told that the secret expedition to Flanders or Holland is not to be given up on account of the return of the hostile fleets to Brest, and the French Directory are so distressed at home, that they cannot find out any army that could be formidable to Great Britain, especially after Buonaparte had declined that expedition, and chosen rather to engage with Turks and Mamelukes. The state of suspense is a painful one; yet in this I must be content to remain, till I hear of the destruction or dispersion of the combined fleets, on which I think the safety of this country, as well as that of Great Britain depends at present. Our malcontents would hide their diminished heads, and disown their rebellious principles, when they were no longer supported by the French Republic, or encouraged by successes."

"The Pope is, infallibly, in a ticklish situation in France, and the respect paid him by the remains of the Roman Catholics will, perhaps, cost him the loss of his head, unless the Directory have hopes of a ransom from the Catholic princes in the negociations for peace, which I hope is not far off; though I think no armistice ought to be agreed to, till France is stript of all her conquests, and content to submit to a limited monarchy. Indeed, an absolute one is too good for them. If it be true that the king of Prussia has acceded to the coalition, the business might soon be over. Remember me kindly to any in your neighbourhood who have not forgotten me, and let me hear frequently of your welfare, and that of all friends with you. I remain, with unfeigned esteem,

Rev. and dear Sir, your very humble servant,"

"CHARLES NISBET."

"*Rev. Mr. Miller, New York.*"

The venerable friend and correspondent to whom the foregoing letter was directed, was considerably more advanced in life than Dr. Nisbet, and survived him for several years. He died in the year 1811, full of years, and of those sanctified honours with which it is the happiness of the pious and devoted minister of religion to close his faithful labours.

Toward the close of A. D. 1800, the last year of the 18th century, the writer of this Memoir, then a pastor in the city of New-York, resolved to take public notice of the close of one century, and the commencement of another, in a discourse from the pulpit. This purpose he accordingly fulfilled on the first day of January, 1801; and out of that Sermon afterwards grew, unexpectedly, the enlarged plan which issued in his "Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century," in two octavo volumes. A few weeks before the day just mentioned, he addressed a letter to his learned and venerated Friend at Carlisle, intimating his purpose, and soliciting from him any suggestions which might aid in executing his plan. That Friend was then in advanced life, in declining health, and in circumstances, on a variety of accounts, unfavourable to any response on an extended scale. Yet his compliance with the request made, was prompt, and as will be seen, both extended and able. The following characteristic answer will show a mind awake to all the occurrences of the day, and especially sensitive with regard to every thing which had a bearing on the interests of good morals and religion.

"*Carlisle*, 16*th Dec.* 1800."

"*Dear Sir*,"

"Your design of preaching the funeral sermon of the 18th century is pious and rational. It is fit that you should celebrate the Mother that bore you; and her character is large and various enough to afford numerous topics of praise and blame."

"Perhaps the most distinguishing character of the age, is the *spirit of free inquiry*, which has been so prominent, and which indeed has been carried almost to madness. I was born in the thirty-sixth year of it, when it was rather past its vigour; and, of late, when it seems to be past child-bearing, it teems with the most monstrous and mis-shapen productions. Air-Balloons; the Rights of Man; the Sovereignty of the People; and the Guillotine, are the productions of its dotage and decrepitude. The arts of destruction have been improved beyond the examples of former ages. Fusillades, Royades, and massacres of six, seven or eight hundred men or women at a time, have been among its chief discoveries. Its love of scepticism has only been equalled by its hardiness of decision. Having proscribed the love of system, it is not shocked with the grossest contradiction. Hence an unrestrained liberty of thought, speech, publication and action, has been combined with an obligation to universal soldiership, though no two things more incompatible with each other can be conceived by the human imagination. And as old people are twice children, the present age, in the progress of decrepitude, is busy in vamping up old publications, and reviving old exploded errors, such as Atheism, Socinianism, and what seems the last

stage of delirium, the indifference to all opinions in religion. Yet this is established by the constitution of the United States, and in all our state constitutions. The equality of the opinions of one God, twenty Gods, or no God, is affirmed in Mr. Jefferson's 'Notes on Virginia,' and seems to be becoming the established creed. By the way, I have just heard with sorrow that he has been chosen President of the United States, and Burr Vice-President. God grant us patience to endure their tyranny! Though it would appear by Buonaparte's drinking to the "Sixteen United Departments," at the entertainment which he gave to our Ambassador, that he considers the sixteen United States as a part of his dominions. You must not forget some great 'discoveries' which have been made in the course of the century which you propose to celebrate. Dr. *Hartley* has discovered that the soul of man is material, by which Dr. *Priestley*, and some of our own distinguished Savans, have been greatly enlightened. Lord *Monboddo*, in his "Essay on the Origin of Language," has discovered that all men were originally beasts, and by passing successively through the state and nature of Dogs, Foxes, Jackalls, Monkeys, and Ourang Outangs, at last arrived at the vocality and rationality of human nature. His Lordship considers the race of Monkeys, Baboons, and Ourang Outangs as nations imperfectly civilized, but in the way to perfection. Mr. *Taylor* has discovered the reality of the mythology of the ancient Greeks, and revived the worship of Jupiter, and the other fabulous deities of Homer. He has made many disciples; but I know not whether he has obtained Buona-

parte's license to visit Paris, and pay his devotions to the Farnesian Hercules, the Apollo of Belvidere, and the Medicean Venus, or is obliged to worship such copies and casts of them as England may afford. *Buonaparte*, while in Egypt, discovered the truth and divinity of the Mohammedan religion, which has been again discovered by *Menou*, his successor, even after Buonaparte had subsequently discovered, in France, the truth of the Christian religion. *Thomas Paine* has discovered that the people have a right to change every form of government every hour, if they please. And the constitutional Clergy of France have discovered that Christianity is an imposture. At the same time, the whole people of France discovered that the body of a naked prostitute was the supreme object of religious worship. Such discoveries surely cannot be matched in any age or nation. Yet, after Nature and Reason had been proclaimed to be the only Gods, *Robespierre* discovered that there was a Supreme Being; though afterwards, on recollection, he discovered that the 'sovereign people' were the Supreme Being, and swore by them accordingly. It has been discovered that Republics are fond of peace, and that monarchs alone make war, by those who have destroyed all the Republics in Europe, except Hamburgh. *Buonaparte* has discovered that Liberty and Equality consist in an unconditional submission to the order of one supreme Consul; and the whole people of France, the owners of this Liberty and Equality, have ratified the discovery. The Democrats of America have discovered that it is for the interest of Christianity to elect a President who is indifferent

whether the people believe that there is one God, or twenty Gods, or no God at all. May not this century be denominated the age of *discovery?* Mr. *Godwin* has discovered that government, religion, morality, marriage and property, are so many encroachments on the liberties of mankind, and that gratitude is a vice and not a virtue."

"Among the *inventions* of the eighteenth century, you must not forget to commemorate the fact, that a Deistical meeting was established in London, by David Williams, originally a dissenting minister. In this place of worship they had sermons, prayers, &c. as in ordinary Christian assemblies. The Deists, however, soon became weary of hearing sermons; and Williams, after two years, went over to France, and, by an easy transition, became an Atheist; came back to England, and formed a Liturgy, and a system of Psalmody, adapted to atheistical worship! Dr. Theophilus Lindsay, a clergyman of the Church of England, resigned his living in the establishment, for a better one among the Unitarians in London; and prevailed on five other established clergymen to do the same, though they did not gain so much by the exchange as he did. They all became Socinians. One clergyman of the Church of Scotland resigned his charge for the same reason; and a popular Seceding minister declared himself a Deist. Several dissenting ministers in different parts of England put off the clerical and Christian character at once, and professed themselves Deists."

"The revolutions of America, France, Venice, Rome, Holland, Naples, and Switzerland, are among the most remarkable events in this century, and likely to give birth to many others, and have entire-

ly changed the relative situation of the powers of Europe. The increase of infidelity and atheism, and the progress that the French Propagandists have made in demoralizing the minds of men, in order to grind them down into 'citizens,' is very alarming, as it has extended to the greatest part of the civilized world, and seems to be still growing. The suppression of the Jesuits would have been noticed as a surprising event, if it had not been followed by many others of a much more surprising character. The unprincipled persecution of the French clergy, by pretended philosophers, who professed to abhor all persecution, might have been noticed as a signal contradiction, had not the promoters of it renounced all system and consistency of opinion. The murder of the kings of France and Sweden, and the poisoning of an Emperor and Empress of Germany, are among the early triumphs of Liberty and Equality, though those things were reckoned crimes in former ages. An ignorance and contempt of antiquity, and a boundless rage for theory and experiment, has been one of the distinguishing features of this age; and though the rage for Liberty and Equality in France has been obliged to succumb into submission to one person, this circumstance has not in the least abated the same rage in America, which may soon, perhaps, lead to a similar despotism, or, what is more probable, in subjection to the despot of France. This century is likely to expire in blood, as the prospect of a general peace in Europe is still at a distance. The number of the victims of war in this century, would constitute a very great and powerful nation, especially if we include their possible posterity."

"With regard to the great works of the eighteenth

century in Poetry, History, the translations of classic authors, Greek and Latin, and especially the principal works which belong to the department of Theology, Biblical Criticism, and Ecclesiastical History, I have reason to know that you need no suggestion. They are too familiar to your mind to require the least hint from me. But I hope, that in treating the Biblical and Theological part of your subject,* you will devote particular attention to the rise and progress of what is emphatically called *Rationalism* among the divines of Germany. This is so prominent, so painful, and, at the same time, so instructive a feature in the ecclesiastical history of the 18th century, that your readers, (if you should print what you deliver,) will, no donbt, expect a special notice of a matter so much talked of in every ecclesiastical circle. And as my reading in German has been probably more extensive than yours, (I do not remember whether you read German at all,) I will give some sketches on the subject. The Divinity of Christ was the first doctrine attacked by the Neologists, or New Reformers; and on this head some embraced the Arian, and some the Socinian system. The next was the Atonement, or Satisfaction of Christ, in attacking which they pretended that all those expressions of our Saviour and his Apostles from which this doctrine was inferred, were only in

* This part of the original plan of the "Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century" was never executed. When the author had completed the first part on "The Revolutions and Improvement in Science, Arts, and Literature, during that period," the remainder of the subject appeared so to swell under his hands, that he did not dare to pursue it.

condescension to Jewish prejudices. Under this head they reckoned the quotations from the Old Testiment prophecies applied to Christ; his being called the Messiah, the Son of God,—the Redeemer of Israel. They denied that his death was a sacrifice; but insisted that it was a mere martyrdom; that he was only a teacher of morality, and natural religion, and that by his doctrine he redeemed his followers from idolatry and superstition, from Levitical ceremonies, and Jewish prejudices. The third doctrine that was attacked was that of Original Sin, or the corruption of human nature, and the loss of God's image by the fall, the belief of which they contended, was inconsistent with our natural notions of the Divine goodness and justice. The fourth doctrine was that of Faith. The new reformers contended that all that the Scriptures mean by Faith, is only the receiving the doctrines of Christ as true, and living according to them; and some openly asserted that we are not bound to believe the history or miracles of Christ and his Apostles, but merely the moral precepts. The fifth doctrine was that of the Sacraments, to which the Reformers ascribed little or no virtue. The sixth was the existence of Angels and Devils, which the Neologists denied, and the eternity of hell-torments, which they maintained to be contrary to all reason. They likewise rejected Creeds and Confessions of Faith, as altogether inconsistent with freedom of inquiry. This led to a contempt of the Scriptures, and a doubt of their divine inspiration, or confining it to a part of the Scriptures. Some confined inspiration to the New Testament. At last they asserted that nothing in Scripture ought

to be believed as coming from God, except what tended to promote the moral perfection of man. Their rules of criticism and exposition of the Scriptures were adapted to this supposition; and they seemed to labour to alter the Christian faith, so as to render it more palatable to the Deists."

"The philosophy of Leibnitz and Wolf, which enjoins on all men to think for themselves, and to believe nothing of which they could not form distinct ideas, contributed greatly to the success of the New Reformers; and led them to expunge all mysteries and miracles out of their creed: and the translation of the works of the English Deists into German gave them still greater assistance. Commentaries, Dictionaries, and Literary Journals were employed for propagating and recommending their new doctrines, by which means many were led to adopt them who had never read the Socinian or Deistical writers. In 1779 Dam published a translation of the New Testament according to these views, which he had conceived from 1758. He maintained that the books of Moses are only so far inspired as they lead to God; that the history of the fall is a fiction; that the book of Job is likewise a fiction; and that there are many falsehoods in the books of Samuel and Joshua; that the Psalms contain contemplations of the divine perfections, but no prophecies; that all the books of the Old Testament are mere human writings; and that the historical books of the New Testament are written in the taste and manner of the ancient Jews, in which truth and fiction are mingled; that Jesus is called the Son of God merely because he was a very good man, both in his life and doctrine; that he was

the son of Joseph and Mary; that his doctrine is pure natural religion; that the truth of his doctrine does not depend on miracles or prophecies, but on its internal worth: that his death was not a sacrifice or atonement for sin; nay that he did not really die on the cross, but fell into a fainting fit; and that he was taken out of his grave, and restored to life and health, after which he left the country of Judea. They maintained that he did not ascend into heaven; and that the effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was no miracle, but the effect of a thunder gust, and the credulity of the multitude. That when the Evangelists relate miracles, they are always to be explained according to the laws of nature. That there are no mysteries, nor revealed religion. That the chief object of Christianity is morality, and nothing more. That the doctrine of the Trinity is not true. That there are no angels nor devils: and that when devils are mentioned in Scripture, they are to be interpreted as meaning either bad men, or grievous diseases. That the image of God consists only in Reason which man has not lost. That the resurrection of the body is only a figurative representation of the soul's continuing to exist after death. That the punishment of bad men after death shall have an end. That what the Scripture says of the day of judgment, and the end of the world, is a mere allegory. Such in general are the doctrines of the New Reformers, though they are not all agreed among themselves. Professor *Tollner*, at Frankfort on the Oder, departed in several points from the established Confession, but he was more discreet and less insolent than many others. *Steinbart*, his successor, went further, and

rejected every thing *positive* in religion, that is, all mysteries, together with the satisfaction of Christ, and the corruption of human nature. He published, in 1778, his book, entitled 'The Philosophy of Christianity separated from Hypothesis.' Professor *Basedow*, curator of the Philanthropin at Dessau, was one of the first and most zealous Reformers; but he was so honest as to confess that he was neither a Lutheran nor a Calvinist. *A. W. Teller*, of Berlin, published a Dictionary of the New Testament. His system was not just the same as that of Dam. The Old Testament, he said, was for the Jews, the New for Christains; of course all those ideas and expressions which the New Testament borrows from the Old, do not belong to Christian doctrine. He taught that the Old Testament was inspired only in so far as God is the author of all spiritual good; that Jesus is God's only-born Son, by his partaking of the divine nature, and being an extraordinary messenger sent from God to men, and adopted by God for his Son; that he is our Redeemer, Mediator and Saviour, as he has delivered us from the torment of a guilty conscience, and given us assurance of the favour of God; that as Mediator, he has by his sacrifice been Surety for men, that God would have them all to be saved; but that his death is only called a 'sacrifice,' in compliance with the Jews, who were accustomed to sacrifices. *Eberhard*, formerly minister at Charlottenburgh, near Berlin, and now professor of Philosophy at Halle, belongs likewise to the New Reformers, as appears by his 'Apology for Socrates.' *Ludke*, a minister of Berlin, in his treatise on 'Toleration,' and *Busching*, the consistorial counsellor, in

his treatise on 'Confessions,' evidently avow their connestion with the same class. *Spalding* and *Semler*, but especially Dr. *Bardt*, and *Nicolai*, of Berlin, have contributed signally to the propagation of the doctrine of the New Reformers, which being so nearly allied to Deism, gave countenance to professed infidelity. *Lessing* published the 'Wolfenbuttle Fragments,' which had a great run in Germany. The tendency of all these fashionable writings was to render the old doctrines contemptible. These doctrines were on all sides exposed to ridicule, as irrational, absurd and pernicious; and the teachers of them were held up to view as bigots, blockheads, and ignoramuses, &c. Many treatises were published against the new doctrines; but these, by being misrepresented and abused in the fashionable journals, were little read. *John Frederick Teller*, superintendent of Zeitz, wrote a Dictionary of the New Testament, in opposition to his brother, before mentioned: but without naming him. But it would be endless to enumerate all the answers that have been made to the New Reformers, especially as these are not perfectly consistent with each other, or with the doctrines of the first Reformers. But many of them are excellent;—*John E. Mebius*, a Dutch minister, has published three volumes of Letters against Steinbart's Philosophy of Christianity, and a humourous performance entitled 'Letters from a Travelling Jew,' exposing these doctrines to deserved ridicule. A treatise entitled 'The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing,' without the name of the author, was printed in 1783, but it never appeared in the Booksellers' shops, as it not only refuted the doctrines of the New Reformers

by arguments, but exposed them to deserved ridicule, the author having a talent for humour. This treatise is highly commended by the orthodox journalists, and seems to have made a considerable, though temporary impression."

"As to religious revolutions in Holland, Switzerland, Denmark and Sweden, I know but little; but as French fashions have long prevailed in those countries, it cannot be wonderful if French infidelity should likewise become fashionable among them."

"With regard to the most important of all subjects, to wit, the state of *orthodoxy and vital piety* in the Church, I fear you will be obliged to represent it in the Eighteenth Century as *every where declining*, and in most places, *awfully declining*. In the Reformed Churches of Germany, France, Holland, Switzerland, and Geneva, this representation, we all know, applies in a most distressing degree; and even in Great Britain, with few exceptions, it is also applicable. We have sometimes hoped that a revival of evangelical preaching, and of attachment to Gospel truth, was beginning to dawn on Scotland toward the close of the century. But, if I mistake not, it is certain that a more decisive revival of true religion has, within a few years, taken place in England, both among some portions of the Dissenters, and still more remarkably in the established Church; under the ministry, and from the writings of such men as Romaine, John Newton, Simeon, Cecil, Scott, and others, distinguished for the general soundness of their opinions, and the fervour of their piety. When Romaine and Hervey arose, in the early part of the century, to plead for evangelical religion, they

stood almost alone among the clergy of the establishment. The spiritual desolation of the Church of England was *then* deplorable. A gratifying change has since taken place: but even yet I hear of scarcely any participation in this revival in the 'high places' of that Church."

"Thus have I gleaned, with great weakness and imperfection, a few hints concerning discoveries and improvements in the century just about to expire, and to which you may think proper to refer, either in the text or the notes of its funeral Sermon. You had no need to be apprehensive that your queries would give me trouble. They do me honour. I should be glad if I had such a man as you in my neighbourhood, who might put such questions to me every day. May the next century bring you peace, happiness and success in your ministry, and better prospects to the public than we have at present!"

"I remain, with sincere and unaltered esteem, Dear Sir, your very humble servant,"

"CHARLES NISBET."

"*Rev. Mr. Miller, New York.*"

In the perusal of the foregoing letter, it ought to be borne in mind that it was written forty years ago, when the errors and leaders of the *Rationalists* of Germany were less extensively and familiarly known than they have since become; and, of course, that the sketches concerning them which it contains, were *then* of greater value than they would be now, when information on the subject is much more common. Still they indicate a mind alive to every thing which had a bearing on Religion, in every part of the world.

And, probably, there was not another individual in the United States, at that time, when an attention to German literature had gained so little popularity even among the literati of our country, who had kept himself so well informed concerning every important movement in that country;—a country which, ever since his day, has been teeming with literary and theological labourers greatly beyond any other section of our globe; and which has exceeded all others in the strange, grotesque, and impious productions of the press, as well in the science of Mind, as in that of Theology.

CHAPTER VII.

His last Illness and Death.

For a number of years before his decease, Dr. Nisbet was not only diligent but uninterrupted in his attendance on the duties of his office. From the time of his recovery from the severe illness which reduced him so low soon after his arrival in the country, until the access of that disease which terminated his life, such were his fidelity and zeal, that he had scarcely ever been prevented, for a single day, from attending on the public duties of his station. He shrunk from no reasonable task, and was ever ready to undertake any labour which promised real benefit to the institution committed to his care. Indeed, literary labour, and especially that which consisted in imparting the elements of knowledge to ingenuous youth, appeared to be the delight of his heart.

He was often, indeed, not a little distressed to find the Trustees of the College entertaining opinions so entirely different from his own, respecting the time necessary to be bestowed on a course of study, and in regard to the best means of conducting the affairs of a literary institution. Instead of enlarging and improving the system of public instruction, they were rather disposed to make it more narrow and superficial; and a course already meagre, still more meagre, and adapted to disappoint the friends of

sound learning. Accordingly, the Trustees, several years before the Doctor's death, directed the course of study in the College to be shortened, and required as much to be done in one year as had formerly occupied two years. To this measure, he strongly objected, as a kind of literary quackery; as adapted to deceive the public; to impose upon young men seeking a liberal education; and as pandering to popular ignorance and parsimony in a manner disgraceful to the guardians of education. His remonstrances, however, were in vain; and there is every reason to believe that the mortification and discouragement connected with this measure, and some others of a similar kind, and indicating the same spirit, preyed upon his mind, and convinced him, that the great hope which had brought him to the country, that he might be instrumental in raising the standard of knowledge and public improvement, could no longer be cherished. His letters, about this time, bear the marks of great depression of spirits, and the gradual departure of those fond expectations which he had once entertained of extensive usefulness to the cause of Literature in the United States.

A few months before his death, in addressing the students of the College, he expressed himself thus: "You have studied at a time when the most false and absurd opinions concerning learning have been current, prevalent, and even rampant. We mean those opinions which suppose that a liberal education may be attained in a very little time; that the study of the ancient languages is useless; that education may be completed in the space of a year; that two years is too long, and that a great part of the

time of education ought to be allotted to amusement, &c. The encouragement that has been given to these opinions among us, has been of far greater detriment to this Seminary than the most active malice of its numerous enemies; as they have rendered it impossible for its numerous friends to recommend or defend it. Who would undertake to recommend a Seminary that produces yearling graduates, and in which the studies of youth are conducted in the most expeditious manner? We ought not to wonder, therefore, that those gentlemen in other States, who have received advice from the newspapers of its present state, have given it no countenance, though previously disposed to encouraged it." And, in the last address which he made to the students before his decease, the following strain of remark sufficiently indicates the bitterness of spirit with which he contemplated his situation. "While this Seminary continues to exist, though in a degraded state, when compared with others, we shall think it our duty to do all that our circumstances permit, for the instruction of those who are committed to our care. It is, indeed, to be lamented that the teachers of youth among us, owing to the disgraceful subjection in which they are placed, cannot do what they would for the improvement of their pupils. To raise expectations which cannot be fulfilled; to undertake to accomplish what they know to be impracticable; to promise to do as much in one or two years, as other Seminaries can do in three or four, is undertaking an impossibility. Men of learning and experience would disdain to use the language of quacks and imposters; and they would be inexcusable if they did

it of their own accord. But when it is imposed on them by others, without their consent, their situation is singularly calamitous, and their circumstances make them resemble a sect under persecution. But, as in this new country, every thing is in a state of infancy; and as in the imperfect state of human affairs, a considerable time is necessary before rational opinions, and salutary institutions, can be introduced, the teachers of youth must be contented to do what they can, though they have it not in their power to do what they would."

"Some of those who have had the government of Seminaries have greatly deceived themselves and the public, by appreciating the labours of learned men by the standard of mechanics and day-labourers, and imagining that the education of youth could be conducted on agricultural and mechanical principles. They seem to have entirely forgotten that the will and exertions of the student are indispensably necessary to his receiving instruction; that the master can only give lessons and exhortations; but that it depends wholly on the will and inclination of the student whether he will give any attention to them or not. A remedy for this, though a very imperfect one, has been proposed, by *examination*. But unless examination had a charm to draw out of the head of a student what had never got into it, it is of no effect. A student on examination can only repeat what he already knows and remembers; but he cannot repeat any thing that he has forgotten, or to which he had never given any attention. Where such opinions are formed by the managers of Seminaries, it is impossible that learning should prosper, as they proceed

from a profound ignorance of human nature. The human mind which is the object of education, is not a mere passive subject, like arable land, wood, or metal, which can make no resistance to the operations of the husbandman or mechanic;—but it is a spiritual substance, endued with understanding and will, the former, perhaps, very weak, and the latter very strong and obstinate; and if the will does not consent to the cultivation of the understanding, all the efforts of the teacher must be fruitless. It sometimes requires a long time to excite the attention of youth, and to make them receive and comprehend the ideas contained in their lessons; and oftentimes a much longer time to make them delight in them, and receive them with sensible pleasure; and till this is the case no valuable progress can be made in learning: for no one will learn any thing against his will, or labour to understand what he dispises, and what gives him no pleasure."

"Those who imagine that a liberal education may be obtained in a year or two, do not seem to consider this, but to suppose that scholars will as readily receive instruction as the earth yields to the plough-share, or the hot iron to the stroke of the hammer. But those who are practically acquainted with education, know by experience that this is not the case; but that many youthful minds resist instruction for a considerable time, and occupy themselves with any trifles rather than their lessons, who, nevertheless, may afterwards be awakened to attention, and be successful, and, in some cases, even highly successful, in the acquisition of knowledge. Their time of awakening must be watch-

ed and waited for, and much instruction must be dispersed in the air, before they can be made to receive any. We must follow nature; we cannot contradict or control it. The quantity of knowledge acquired by any student must be in the compound ratio of his natural capacity, and the degree of his attention and willingness to learn. And this accounts in the most satisfactory manner for the great difference that we discover in the attainments of students who have had the same opportunities for acquiring knowledge."

"Hence we may see the absurdity and folly of all short roads to learning. They all proceed on false principles, and must end in miserable disappointment. Quacks and projectors in education have indeed proposed an endless variety of plans for diminishing the labour, and shortening the time of study, by promising to teach as much in a few lessons as has been hitherto done by the labour and application of several years. In Germany and elsewhere, quacks have undertaken to teach young men every science by way of diversion: but not one real scholar has ever been formed by these compendious methods, which have never produced any thing else than dunces and smatterers."

While these trammels on the discharge of his official duties mortified and grieved him, he was not free from embarrassment in regard to his temporal support. The salary which the Trustees of the College originally promised to pay him, was £250 sterling, or about $1200. A few years before his death, finding the number of students small, and the finances of the Institution declining, they reduced

his salary to $800; a sum altogether insufficient for the comfortable support of his family. Even this sum, however, was miserably paid. Arrears were allowed to accumulate to an extent mortifying to him, and embarrassing to his family. Insomuch that, at the time of his decease, these arrears had nearly reached the amount of four or five years salary; and were recovered at last only by a legal process. The Church at Carlisle, to which he steadily ministered alternately with Dr. Davidson, as has been already mentioned, also stipulated to pay him a small salary for his services. It was a mere pittance; but, pittance as it was, it was never punctually paid; and a considerable balance had accumulated at the time of his death, which his executor recovered by a similar process. It is unnecessary to say, that these things could not fail to make a deep impression on one who had laboured so faithfully and ably to serve the Institution committed to his care; and who had left his native country on the faith of the prospects and promises which have been already described.

About the beginning of January 1804, Dr. Nisbet was seized with a severe cold, accompanied with inflammation of the lungs and fever, which gradually gained ground until it terminated his life. After the disease began to assume a threatening aspect, and especially within a few days of the closing scene, he appeared to suffer exceedingly; but he endured it all with remarkable patience and fortitude. He retained the possession of his mental powers to the last. The only faculty which appeared to be strikingly impaired was his memory, which in health, was among the master powers of his mind. This pre-

vented his holding much connected conversation with those around him during his last hours. The exercises of devotion appeared to occupy his heart and his lips as long as he was able to utter them. The last efforts of vocal utterance which could be distinguished, were employed in articulating with great tenderness, the name of his wife; and in saying with peculiar fervour, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" With these words on his lips, he gently fell asleep, on the 18th day of January, A. D. 1804, having within three days completed the sixty-eighth year of his age.

It is hardly necessary to say, that the demise of the venerated President, covered not only his family, but also the whole College with the mantle of mourning. For, notwithstanding all the failures of the Trustees of the College to fulfill their engagements, and to provide for his comfort and that of his family, these failures were rather to be ascribed to the deplorable scantiness of the funds committed to their care, and the want of skill and enterprize in managing them, than to the want of respect or affection for his high character. The decease of this excellent man called into exercise and manifested a widely extended and peculiar attachment and veneration. The College—the town—the whole neighbourhood were moved, and appeared as mourners. The funeral was attended by multitudes. The Trustees, Faculty and students of the College appeared in a manner which marked their deep sense of the loss which they had sustained. A sermon was preached on the occasion by the Rev. Dr. Davidson, Vice President of the College, and Pastor of the Church in Carlisle.

Of this sermon it is judged proper to give the following extract.

"We are called this day to perform a very mournful office indeed! To convey to the house of silence what was mortal of a highly respected Brother and Servant of the lord. Great is the loss which we have this day to deplore! The world is deprived of a Scholar and a Divine worthy to be ranked among the most eminent that ancient or modern times have produced. The occasion will justify me in departing from our usual practice, and attempting a brief sketch of so worthy a character. This tribute is due to his great talents and services. Nor can I withhold it without doing violence to my own feelings. Having been associated with him in the duties of the same pulpit, and of the same literary institution for nearly nineteen years, no one can have had a better opportunity of observing and admiring his extensive acquaintance with languages and science—his benevolent aims and exertions—and his ardent zeal for the interests of religion and learning."

"When some gentlemen of a truly public spirit had obtained a charter for a College in this Borough, (to bear the name of one of our earliest and most accomplished Patriots,) it was their wish to place at the head of it some one who was distinguished in the literary world; well knowing that the reputation and usefulness of such a Seminary would depend greatly on the plan of education first adopted, and the manner in which that plan was carried into effect. A Seminary, in a neighbouring State, had risen to high reputation, under the direction of a President called from North Britain;—a country

long and justly famed for its learned Universities, and eminent scholars. It was expected by the founders of this institution, that, under a similar head, it might acquire an equal degree of celebrity, and become equally useful."

"The Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet was known to be a scholar uncommonly well skilled in languages, ancient and modern, and in those sciences which are most necessary to form the minds of young men. But he was, at that time, and had been for more than twenty years, comfortably settled as a pastor of a large Church in Montrose; and to that people we are assured he had officiated, during that time, with such ability and assiduity, that they were greatly attached to him."

"The Trustees, however, of the new College, having unanimously chosen him for Principal, thought it their duty to press him by every affecting argument, to the acceptance of an office, in which they hoped he would be as comfortable as in his former station, and far more extensively useful. Great was the perplexity of his mind, during a whole year, before he could come to a final determination. To leave a society so much pleased with him as their spiritual teacher; to bid a last adieu to his native land, and the companions of his youth; to cross an ocean whose dangers appeared formidable; and to cast himself among strangers, in a new world; what a sacrifice of his feelings to a sense of duty did this require!"

"He arrived here on the 4th day of July, 1785, to enter immediately on the duties of his office; hoping soon to see his prospects of usefulness realized. But

how uncertain are all our possessions, and all our prospects! Very soon after his arrival, by a violent fit of sickness, he was rendered incapable of any public duty. From the shock which his constitution then received, it seems never to have fully recovered; and such was his debility, and consequent dejection of spirits, that a return to his native land was seriously contemplated."

"As soon, however, as his health, in the following season was, pretty well restored, he resumed his former station. And now we see him entering on a scene of active usefulness, which it would be great injustice to his character to pass lightly over."

"Such was his desire to put this College on a most respectable footing; and such were his ideas of the evils of a superficial education, and the advantages of a thorough and solid one, that he spared no pains to have his pupils well initiated in every branch of useful knowledge. His acquaintance with books and languages was far, very far beyond what is commonly acquired by those who obtained a liberal education. His memory was indeed extraordinary, and retained with ease whatever was committed to it! With the languages necessary to be known in order to a critical knowledge of ancient authors, sacred and profane, he was intimately conversant. The beauties of the Greek and Latin classics lay unveiled to his penetrating eye; and there was scarcely a remarkable passage which he could not accurately repeat at pleasure. To show still further the amazing powers of his mind, and the abundant sources of his knowledge, it is proper to mention, that his acquaintance with the French, Italian, German, Low Dutch

and Spanish languages, gave him easy access to the most celebrated works in these modern tongues. Hence we see how it was practicable for him to compose, and deliver, from day to day, (as he did in the first years,) those Lectures on Criticism, Logic, and Moral Philosophy, which have been so much admired."

"In addition to these duties, after he had been some time here he undertook and executed another very important work,—which scarcely any other man in his circumstances would have attempted. This was, to write and deliver, from day to day, for more than two years, a course of lectures on theological subjects. These lectures form one of the most valuable systems of Divinity that the world has perhaps ever seen. And these he had the patience to dictate to his pupils, (as he did also his philosophical lectures,) so that they could write down every sentence."

"To complete his character let it be remembered, that he was an eminent minister of the Gospel; and that in addition to all his other labours, he preached for the most part statedly, as one of the pastors of this church. The soundness of his principles and the solidity of his sermons are well known."

"The study of the holy Scriptures was his chief delight, and in the exposition and application of divine truths, he was indeed *a master in Israel.* How serious and solemn was his manner! How plain and perspicous his style, and perfectly free from every thing pompous or affected! He sought not the applause of men, but the salvation of souls, and the glory of his Redeemer. Ever solicitous to exalt the

love and grace of God, and to humble the pride of man, *salvation by grace* was his favourite theme. At the same time, no one could be a more severe reprover of vice, or more forcibly inculcate that purity of heart and life, without which all pretences to faith and religion are vain.—To you my friends, the people of this congregation, there is a voice addressed this day, calling upon you long and affectionately to remember him, who has so long dispensed unto you the precious word of life; to retain his instructions, and continue stedfast in your Christian profession. Remember also the excellent example which he set before you. View him sustaining with propriety every endearing relation, and with exquisite sensibility, attentive to every social duty. Was he not a most agreeable companion, especially in his more tranquil days? Was he not ever most happy when in the company of his friends, and diffusing cheerfulness all around him? Who could but admire his lively remarks, his quick replies, and the severe strokes he was frequently aiming at what he conceived to be the follies, the extravagancies, the injustice and impieties that so greatly abound? To see religion flourishing, and mankind rejoicing in its richest blessings, together with the benefits of a wise and efficient government,—this he earnestly desired, and for this he fervently prayed."

"His addresses to the pupils, and especially at Commencements, contained most important directions for their conduct in life; and showed his great detestation of every vice, and of slavery and oppression under every form. Those addresses alone would make a considerable volume.—Let all the

sons of this Seminary affectionately remember the exhortations received from him, who felt for them all the solicitude of a Father."

"Finally, let the Trustees and Patrons of this Seminary, amidst all their discouragements (and this which may appear the greatest of all,) be exhorted, *not to faint or grow weary in well doing.* This was an event sometime and certainly to be expected. —An entire year has not yet elapsed, since your deceased principal saw, to his great grief, the beautiful Edifice, that you had nearly finished, envoloped in flames. Yet you persevered in the good work you had undertaken; and in lieu of that which you lost, a much larger and more convenient building has rapidly progressed, under your direction. O how it would have pleased him to have seen it completed, and the institution, which has already sent forth so many young men to fill important stations in society, brought to the desired perfection, and placed on a broad and permanent basis!—But such was not the will of Heaven! His race of usefulness here was run."

"Attacked with violence, on the first day of the year, by a pulmonary complaint, that had been for some time growing upon him, the remaining days of life were spent with much bodily distress. But when the important moment arrived,—quietly, without a groan, he breathed his last; and committed, as we have sufficient ground to hope, into the hands of his Redeemer, a *spirit ripe for glory;*—and, bidding a world of uncertainty and sorrow an everlasting adieu, entered into *the promised rest.*—At a good age,—at the close of his 68th year—concluded his

active and useful life.—May we all live the life, as we would hope to die the death, of the righteous; and may our last end be like his!"

Dr. Erskine, the excellent friend and affectionate correspondent of the subject of this Memoir, died just one year before him. In his will he bequeathed to Dr. Nisbet a large part of his Library, as a testimonial of respect and affection. No information, however, of this bequest reached America before Dr. Nisbet's decease. In a few days after the death of Dr. Erskine, his surving Son addressed a letter to Dr. N. announcing the demise of his Father, but not mentioning the legacy. Toward the close of the year 1803, Miss Erskine addressed a letter to the venerable legatee—announcing this token of her Father's affectionate remembrance. But before this letter reached its destination, Dr. Nisbet was no more; and nothing further, of course, was said or done respecting the bequest.

Soon after Doctor Nisbet's decease, the following Latin Ode to his memory was prepared by Mr. James Ross, who had once held a Professorship in Dickinson College; and was, at the date of this composition, a Professor in Franklin College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; who knew him well, and was a warm admirer of his character. It seems to have been submitted to the judgement and the disposal of the respectable Gentleman whose name appears in the Inscription,—and was probably by him committed to the press. And although its claims on the score of Latin poetry are indeed very humble, yet as a testimonial of respect from a most excellent man, it is worthy of being here recorded.

Ad GULIELMUM HAMILTON

SALUTEM.

Hos ego versiculos; in memoriam viri integerrimi, nec non et ex omnibus quos ætas præsens, annis multis per orbem terrarum tulit, doctissimi, tesserulam honoris, typis, ad Te, tuis mandandos, mitto; quippe qui te facilem et commodum meis, aliis occasionibus, haud semel precibus dedisti. JA. ROSS.

In Obitum
Viri clarissimi CAROLI NISBET, D. D.
Coll. Dickinson. Præsidis, qui octodecimo
Januarii, A. D. 1804, vita decessit.

TE quoque, qui nostris dignatus vivere Nisbet
Finibus, eripuit mors! fera Te eripuit!
Tu, tandem, fessus, metam finemque laborum
Docte, invenisti, corpore deposito.
Preclarus, turbas hominum, sociosque relictos,
Morte redemptus, nunc despicis altivolus.
Divitias quoque habes partas hic, munera culta
Mentis nempe bonæ, quas dedit ipse DEUS.
Hæc autem, vestes, aurum, popularis et aura,
Grata licet quondam, et fulgida, diffugiunt.
Finito ergo opere, propter quod missus in orbem,
Tempore et expleto, convenit ut redeas.
Haud aliter servus, longas legatus in oras
Qui, domino, rediit, jam revocante domum.
Nuncius Americorum hic tristes pervolat oras,
"Nisbet mortuus! Heu! doctus et ille perit!"
Mentibus, ore, oculis, Studiosi (Academia plorat)
Nisbet nunc quærunt auxilio ut subeat!
Nisbet namque docens, vestigia, quæ sua, pressit;
Non aliena sequens: legit at ille sua.
Nisbet eos docuit falso secernere verum,
Atque domique foris sedulus officio.
Nisbet eos dscuit rerum cognoscere causas;
Nisbet et instituit quærere vera bona.
O quoties, præco pandis cum themata sacra,
"Vivito" dixi "nec sit brevis hora tua;
"O felix, sortita Hunc, fausta Columbia, tellus!
"Vivito Nisbet! nec mors fera Te rapiat!"

'Fidite ne vestris; heu! vana opera omnia,' dixit,
'Confugite ad Jesum, vita in eoque salus.'
Vivere si licuisset nunc, o si! frueremur
Voce tua, aspectu, consilioque pio.
O utinam vixisses! omnia namque videnur
Rapta simul Tecum, votaque nostra jacent!
Cecropidæ Anytique reum flebantque Platona,
Nisbet, Te Juvenes non secus atque gement!
Vivet in æternum virtus tua, nulla vetustas
Delebit famam, conspicuumque decus.
De patria que tua sors si certabitur olim,
Te volet esse suum hæc, illaque et esse suum,
Nulla ætasque futura tacebit nomina Nisbet,
Per terrarum orbem clara, negata mori.
Coll. Franklin Lancastriæ, Kal. Mart. 1804.

The Trustees of the College desired, and we are assured, intended, to erect a suitable monument over the grave of their venerated President; but their poverty and a load of debt, together with their want of zeal and enterprize, prevented the execution of their wishes. At length however, this memorial of respect was completed by the filial affection, and at the expense, of his only surviving son, the Hon. Alexander Nisbet, Judge of the city court of Baltimore. The following is the epitaph which it bears, and which is ascribed to the pen of the late Rev. Dr. John M. Mason, who is universally known as having been one of the most accomplished and eloquent divines which have adorned the American Church, and who was one of the successors of Dr. Nisbet, as President of Dickinson College.

M. S.
Caroli Nisbet, S. S. T. D.
Qui unanimi hortatu
Curatorum Academiæ Dickinsoniensis,

Ut Primarii ejusdem munia susciperet,
Patria sua, Scotia, relicta,
Ad Carleolum venit, A. D. 1785.
Ibique per novem decem annos
Summa cum laude
Muneri suo incubuit,
Viri, si quis alius, probi piique
Omni doctrina ornatissimi,
Lectione immensa, memoria fideli,
Acumine vero ingenii facetiis salibusque
Plane miri, et undique clari.
Nemini vero mortalium nisi iis infensi,
Qui cum Philosophiæ prætextu sacris insultant.
Familiæ autem suæ amicisque,
Ob mores suaves, benignos, hilares comesque
Unice delecti.
Animam placide efflavit 14mo. Kal. Feb. 1804,
Anno ætatis 68vo.
Abiit noster: proh dolor!
Cui similem haud facile posthac visuri sumus!
At quem Terra amisit, lucrifecit Cœlum,
Novo splendore
Corporis resuscitati, vitæque eterni
Cum Domino Jesu, omnibusque sanctis,
Ovantem rediturum.

Dr. Nisbet's person was, in height, rather below the middle stature, and, in early life, slender and full of agility. He often said, that in his youth, in walking, it was easy for him to keep pace with an ordinary horseman; and that he frequently, on a winter morning, walked twenty or thirty miles before breakfast, without any painful effort. Before his arrival at middle age, however, he became corpulent, and continued so to the end of life. It came upon him suddenly, like a disease; and no degree of abstinence which he could adopt, appeared to arrest or diminish it. Yet his corpulence did not interfere much with

activity, even in advanced age. His motions were habitually rapid, and such as might have been expected in one who had been once so remarkably agile. He was characteristically quick in every movement, physical and intellectual. There was nothing sluggish or drawling in his constitution. Neither did his corpulence interfere with his health. This was seldom interrupted. He was, indeed, occasionally troubled with some disorder of the stomach, somewhat similar to the modern fashionable disease, called *dyspepsia*. He, however, very seldom took medicine; but generally found himself entirely relieved by a fast of twenty-four hours, which was his unfailing remedy.

The Print prefixed to this Memoir is copied from a painting taken about the fortieth year of his age; which is said, by those who knew the venerable original at that early period, to be an excellent likeness of what he then was. The Mezzotinto copy here presented, is executed with admirable success.

Mrs. Nisbet survived the Doctor more than three years. Her health and strength declined from his decease. She departed this life on the 12th day of May, 1807, in the hope and consolation of the Gospel. She was an excellent woman, greatly attached to her husband, and peculiarly adapted and devoted to his comfort.

The library which Dr. Nisbet left, was a peculiar one. It was rather select and curious than large. Such a collection of books is rarely found. Of what may be called common-place works, he had comparatively few. But of books singular in their character, or very rare, he was a zealous collector. In this

respect, his library was probably a unique in our country. It comprised works not only in the Latin and Greek, but also in the French, German, Spanish, and Italian languages, all of which, it is believed, he read with entire ease. As he made no will, this collection fell, without any testamentary disposition, into the hands of his widow and children. Some years after his death, two of his grand children, viz. the Right Rev. Bishop M'Coskry, of Michigan, and Henry C. Turnbull, Esq. of Maryland, who had obtained the disposal of the Library, generously made a present of it to the Theological Seminary at Princeton, as the most suitable ultimate destination of a collection of books made by a Presbyterian minister, whose ruling passion was the diffusion of human and divine knowledge, and who had come to our country, as has been already stated, with the hope of being able to contribute something toward elevating the standard of education, and especially of Theological education, on this side of the Atlantic.

This donation to the Theological Seminary being made at a time when it was uncertain whether heresy or schism, or both, might not expose every thing committed to that Institution to the danger of perversion; the generous donors thought proper to constitute the Presbytery of New Brunswick Trustees of the Library, to guard against its being employed to promote principles hostile to those of the original possessor, and, in case of such perversion, to make an ultimate disposal of it. This trust the Presbytery has accepted.

The present chapter will be closed by a brief state-

ment of the surviving children and descendants of this eminent man.

At the time of his decease he left two sons, and two daughters living.

His eldest son, *Thomas*, survived him only a short time. He was never married, and died without reformation.

His second son, *Alexander*, after graduating in Dickinson College, studied law with Judge Duncan, of Carlisle, and settled, in the practice of his profession, in the city of Baltimore; where his talents, integrity, and application soon secured him a respectable amount of professional success. He has occupied the office of Judge of the City Court of Baltimore for twenty-two years. He married Miss Mary C. Owings, of Maryland. They have had seven children—three sons, and four daughters. The daughters only survive.

The Doctor's eldest daughter, *Mary*, who, as was before stated, married William Turnbull, Esquire, died about twenty years after her father. She left nine children; four sons and five daughters. Of these, all, except one of the sons, are still living, and in various highly respectable situations.

The Doctor's younger daughter, *Alison*, who married Dr. M'Coskry, in 1795, was left a widow, in the year 1818, and is still living. She has had six children; three sons and three daughters. Of these one son only, and two daughters survive. The son is the Right Reverend Samuel M'Coskry, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Michigan. Of the daughters, Mary, the second, married the Rev. Erskine Mason, D. D. of the city

of New York; and Alison the youngest, married Mr. Charles D. Cleaveland, late Professor in Dickinson College, now Principal of a respectable literary Institution in the city of Philadelphia.

In a few months after the decease of Dr. Nisbet, an extended Monody to his memory was published by CHARLES KEITH, M. D. a Physician, of Scotland, who afterwards removed and practised his profession in England. He considered himself as deeply indebted to the Doctor, for a large part of his early education, and for his success in life; and was ardently attached to his memory. After Dr. Nisbet's death, Dr. Keith, in a letter to his younger son, Alexander Nisbet, Esquire, of Baltimore, expressed himself concerning his reverend friend in the following strong language. "Ever dear to me must be the Son of my ever honoured and much lamented Friend. Proud I am to have had such a Friend: for, take him for all and all, I never knew his equal; and proud you may well be to have had such a Father. His death was to me a grievous affliction. His loss I can never supply. But if I have lost so much in a friend separated from me by the wide Atlantic, what must not your mother and all of you have lost!"

After the decease of Dr. Nisbet, Dickinson College continued still further to decline. Its deplorable poverty, and the still more deplorable want of zeal, harmony and efficiency on the part of the board of Trustees ensured an existence, if continued, sickly and feeble. Five or six Presidents in succession were appointed, but without any effectual relief; until at length the Presbyterian board—for such was the predominant influence which sustained the Insti-

tution—surrendered it into the hands of gentlemen connected with the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. By the brethren of that denomination, the Institution has since been borne onward and upward with commendable zeal, and with a very respectable degree of success.

CHAPTER VIII.

His Character, &c.

The attentive reader will have seen enough in the foregoing statements and remarks to enable him to make a distinct estimate of the character of Dr. Nisbet, without any formal attempt to draw his portrait. Yet for the sake of furnishing a convenient medium for presenting to the public some of the Letters, and other testimonials which follow, and which might have been greatly multiplied, this closing Chapter is added to the foregoing. The writer acknowledges, too, that in making this addition, he is in some degree influenced by a lurking reluctance to take a final leave of a character so endeared to himself by a thousand most respectful and affectionate recollections.

Probably no minister in the American Church, now living, was at once more intimately acquainted with Dr. Nisbet, and more capable of appreciating his character, than the Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green, late President of the College of New Jersey, and still, in a venerated old age, zealously and ably serving the cause of evangelical truth and order. This Father of the American Church, at the request of the writer of the present Memoir, transmitted to him the following Letter, which is inserted for the double purpose of presenting to the public the interesting facts and opinions which it contains; and also, as a memo-

rial of that early and long continued friendship which led to this union and co-operation in erecting an humble monument to the memory of the illustrious dead.

"*Philadelphia, April 30th,* 1839."

"*Rev. and Dear Sir,*"

"I am now to fulfil a promise which you drew from me, that I would furnish you with some of my reminiscences of the late Rev. Dr. Charles Nisbet."

"My first acquaintance with this eminent man was at Princeton, shortly after his arrival from Scotland, in the year 1785. My impression and belief is —although I cannot affirm it as a fact—that before he went to Carlisle, he left his family in Philadelphia, and made a short visit to his old friend Dr. Witherspoon. I was then a professor in the College at Princeton, and was, as a matter of course, introduced to Dr. Nisbet, with whom however I had but little intercourse or conversation. Nearly the whole of what I distinctly remember of him, at that time, is, that Dr. Witherspoon conducted him into the college chapel, where he offered the usual evening prayer with the faculty and students."

"It was not till the month of February, in 1786, that I was licensed to preach, and not till the spring of 1787, that I was settled in Philadelphia; and during this period I knew nothing more of Dr. Nisbet than I have already mentioned, except that he was established at Carlisle, as the President of Dickinson College."

"Shortly after my collegiate connection with Dr. Sproat, I obtained—but from whom I do not remem-

ber—a copy of a printed sermon delivered at Carlisle by Dr. Nisbet, soon after he had entered on his official duties in that place. So far as I know, this was the only publication that he made in this country. It has been, I find, a prevalent belief, that after he left Scotland, (how it was before I know not,) he never made a publication of any kind: but of the sermon to which I have referred, I have a distinct recollection; and I have a strong impression, yet not amounting to confidence, that the text of the sermon was Acts vii. 22: 'And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.'"

"Dr. Nisbet was in the habit of visiting Philadelphia at the annual meetings of the General Assembly of our church. When he was a member of that body, he came here of course: and when he was not a member, he selected this period to make an excursion for the benefit of his health, and to see and converse with his clerical brethren, from all parts of our country; as well as to enjoy the company of a large circle of friends in this city—friends among other denominations of Christians, as well as his own. He excelled in conversation, and greatly delighted in social intercourse. I well remember to have heard him remark, that at the meetings of our Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies, the private and friendly intercourse of the ministers and elders of our church, was, in his opinion, as useful as their ecclesiastical acts as judicatories; and to me, he added, far more pleasing."

"It was at an early period of my pastoral life, but the year I do not remember, that at one of his annual visits to Philadelphia, we renewed our former

acquaintance; and from that time till his death, I had much intercourse with him, both in personal conversation and in epistolary correspondence. Most of his letters to me were of great length—closely written, but as legible, nearly, as a well printed book; for his hand writing was beautiful, and remarkably distinct. He very rarely erased or amended a single word that he had first penned. I once asked him how he could do this, as I knew he never used transcription. His reply was characteristic. 'Your question, said he, is easily answered. I always write what first comes into my head, and leave it to my correspondents to erase and amend just as much as they please.' I regret to say, that I have lent and given away his letters, till I have not one remaining, of those he addressed to myself. A long one to Dr. Witherspoon has come into my hands, which I hope to insert in his life."

"Dr. Nisbet, was, beyond comparison, a man of the most learning that I have ever personally known. Of this learning, however, he was *never* ostentatious. It discovered itself in his conversation and letters, but without any thing like intentional display. In my hearing, he never even adverted to his various attainments. Yet from what I observed, and what I have learned from others, I believe it may be safely stated, that beside his own language, he was skilled in Hebrew, including the Chaldee, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, German, and probably Erse. Whether he was, or was not, acquainted with the Arabic, Syriac, Persic or Sanscrit, I do not know. With the ancient classics, and with the modern tongues I have mentioned, his familiarity was great

—in each, he had read a considerable portion of the best authors. When he left Europe, he was supposed to be among the best Greek scholars it contained. While at the University, I have been credibly informed, that, during one of the vacations, he read all the Homilies of Chrysostom. Of the Iliad of Homer, he could repeat by memory a great, if not the greater part. But he was not merely a linguist. There was scarcely a subject, or topic, in any department of liberal knowledge, and even in some of the mechanic arts, with which he was not acquainted—doubtless with some, more accurately and extensively than with others. Of what are usually called the exact sciences, I think his knowledge was only general. I have reason to know that he was an anatomist. Being greatly afflicted, in the early part of my ministry, with weak eyes, and observing that, at the age of about sixty, he never used spectacles, I asked him what means he had used to preserve his eye-sight, in what appeared to me a state of perfection. He took up the subject at once, and after explaining the structure of the visual organs, with anatomical exactness, he applied the explanation to the means which he had used, and which others might use, to preserve them in a healthy state. By following his directions, in connection with the use of some additional means of my own devising, the complaint of my eyes was gradually and entirely removed; so that now, in the latter part of my seventy seventh year, my vision is far better, than is common, in men of my age."

"In stating my reminiscences, this may be as proper a place as any other, to mention a remarkable oc-

currence in the life of Dr. Nisbet, relative to an affection of his sense of tasting, the state of his stomach, and probably of his whole corporeal system; a description of which I received from his own lips. He said that at one period of his life, he was, for several years, without any sensation of hunger, any desire of food, or any relish of it, when it was taken; so that if he had been starved to death, he thought he should have died without any craving of sustenance. His general health, however, did not suffer much; and he took his meals, both as to time and quantity, as his judgment dictated, and without loathing, but without any sensible gratification. At length, having occasion to go to a distance in a stage coach, he resolved to make the first stage, of some twelve or fifteen miles, without his breakfast; and that, on calling for it at the stage house, he, for the first time in twelve years, ate a part of a beef-steak, with appetite and relish. The whole time I was acquainted with him, he was, in his person, fleshy, without being corpulent, very active, and quick in all his muscular motions. He dined with me a number of times; and I remarked nothing peculiar in his eating or drinking, except that he always refused gravy with his meat."

"Dr. Nisbet's extensive reading in the principal languages of modern Europe, had rendered him well informed of the state and tendencies of society, in the several nations of that quarter of our globe. Hence it was, that from the very origin of the French revolution, he foresaw and predicted its desolating course, and denounced it with as much decision and bitterness as Edmund Burk himself. With the most

of my countrymen, I thought favourably of it at first; and, in one of my letters, told him, that I hoped it might be the design of God, in this providential dispensation, to make use of the rough hand of infidelity to prostrate the barriers of Popish ignorance and superstition, and then to pour out his Spirit on the immense population of that kingdom, and produce a glorious revolution, in favour of pure religion, and the liberties of mankind. He answered me by saying, that if it was a desirable thing to pull down the Pope, and set up the Devil, it must be confessed that a glorious revolution was going on in France; and that if it was the design of God, in his providence, to make the enormities perpetrated among that people productive of any immediate good, we could only say, 'How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' My partiality to the French revolution was terminated at an early period of its progress, and the Doctor, from that time, had no hesitation in giving me his whole mind on the subject. From some cause or other, he was able to predict coming events at that period, even in opposition to existing appearances. Thus, at the time when the Constituent Assembly had decreed that France should remain a monarchy, and the people were enthusiastically swearing fealty to their king, Dr. Nisbet wrote to me, as near as I can recollect, in these words: 'Poor Louis, he will have a sham trial, and a real execution.' When I complimented him on the sagacity manifested in his prognostics, he told me, that he deserved no other credit for his predictions, than what was due to his lucky interpretation of the prophetic enigmas of the

celebrated Nostrodamus; that when he wished to know what was to come next, he had only to consult Nostrodamus, (no doubt, in his 'Centuries of Quatrains,') and employ his skill in solving his prophetic symbols; in which he had hitherto been very successful. I told him, that since Nostrodamus was so sure a guide, I should like to know how the French revolution was to terminate. 'O,' said the Doctor, 'it will all go to the Devil at last.' How much, or how little, of *exact truth* there was, in this statement about Nostrodamus, I pretend not to determine. Dr. Nisbet never trifled with truth, when the subject was serious; but he both hated and ridiculed the French revolution, and that incessantly. I could fill more than this second sheet of my reminiscences, with his ludicrous allusions to the events, and the language to which it gave rise. I will mention but a single instance. While the General Assembly of our Church was in session, in May, 1796, a very valuable horse was stolen from me, out of a pasture-lot in the vicinity of the city. Dr. Nisbet, who was paying us his annual visit, on hearing of this occurrence, hastened to my house, and something like the following colloquy ensued: 'So,' said he, 'I understand you have lost your horse.' Yes, Doctor, I replied, the night before last, a thief fancied him, and I fear I shall never see him again. 'No doubt,' said he, 'it was done by one of the sovereign people; he was taken, without your leave, by a pure act of sovereignty. But, sir, it was only a forced loan; it was an act of practical Liberty and Equality; the rascal thought that you had been riding long enough, and that, by all the laws of equality, it

was his turn to ride now; and so he made use of his liberty to appropriate to himself a part of your property, without your consent.' "

" Lord Kames, in his Elements of Criticism, says, 'Memory and wit are often conjoined, sound judgment seldom with either.' Of the justice of at least the first half of this dictum of his countryman, Dr. Nisbet might be referred to, as a striking example. In memory and wit, I always viewed him as a prodigy. I do not mean to say, that his memory was without a parallel; for both in ancient and modern times, I have read of those who equalled him in this faculty. But I can truly say, that I never myself have known an individual that could pretend to be his equal. Every thing that he had read, heard or seen, seemed to be immovably fixed in his mind, and to be ready for his use. Not only could he refer to any fact or reasoning, in the numerous authors which he had perused in various languages, but all the incidents in the newspapers of the day, and in other ephemeral publications that fell under his notice, he never forgot. His letters to me sometimes referred to occurrences in this city, which, although on the spot, I had not observed, or had entirely forgotten, till he called my attention to them. He told me, however, in one of the last interviews that I had with him, that he found his memory was less faithful and tenacious than it had formerly been. In regard to his wit, it seemed to be instinctive, and to gush out, almost involuntarily, on all occasions. Sometimes it showed itself in that pleasant play of the fancy which is denominated Humour; and sometimes and oftener, it might be called broad Wit, irresistibly

provocative of agitating mirth, or laughter. Too often for his own quiet, it was satirical, or sarcastic; causing loss of friendship in some who could not make allowance for an overbearing propensity. For truly, in him, satirical remark or allusion was not prompted by a misanthropic or malignant spirit, or disposition. On the contrary, he was benevolent, compassionate and kind, in no ordinary degree. Seldom have I known a man, more easily or certainly melted by distress or misfortune; or more ready to do all in his power to relieve it. After the dreadful calamity, the yellow fever of 1793, his sympathy was so awakened by the death of his friends, that on his next visit to our city, he exhibited little else than sadness in his demeanour and conversation. I once took the liberty to say to him, that it seemed to me, that whether in the communications of others, or by his own observation, his attention was drawn, with somewhat more than ordinary force, to an object, he speedily saw it in some obliquity of aspect, in some grotesque or ludicrous form, that rendered it ridiculous, or the fit subject of satire. He frankly replied, 'I think there is something in that.' I thought it an evidence of deep conscientiousness, that, as far as possible, he restrained himself from saying what would cause levity and laughter on the Lord's day; and that he did not intentionally admit any effusion of wit into his sermons. You will notice the qualification with which I have expressed myself in the last sentence; for the truth was, he was sometimes witty, and caused a smile, without intending it, or probably being conscious of it himself. Thus, he once made me smile, while preaching for me in my own pulpit; by comparing a man who is

'carried about by every wind of doctrine,' and apparently afraid to trust his own understanding to fix him steadfastly in any article of his religious creed, to a man who should make the experiment of tying up his own eyes, to see how he would walk blindfolded. Expressions of this character were so common with him, both in conversation and writing, that I think he probably often used them, without being at all sensible that they were ludicrous."

"He never showed a note in the pulpit; and whatever he might have done in the early periods of his ministry, I am persuaded that while I knew him, he rarely, if ever, wrote a sermon. His mind was so stored with ideas on every topic of a religious kind, and his acquaintance with the holy Scriptures was so accurate and familiar, that with his ready utterance, he could preach on any subject without much labour of preparation. His public discourses abounded in thought, and thought that was pertinent, useful, and often striking; but he was loose and miscellaneous, rather than close and methodical. He always, indeed, adhered to a general method, in the treatment of his subject; but he was not solicitous to put each expression in its most proper place, or to exclude matter merely collateral, if it fell in his way. His voice in preaching was articulate, but not powerful; not loud enough to reach the remote parts of a large and full church, so as to be heard without a painful listening. He was not aware of this, till he heard of it in the way of complaint; and then he altogether refused to attempt a public service in the larger churches of our city. 'I cannot preach in your mammoth houses,' was his reply to every invitation, after he had formed the resolution I have

mentioned. Yet he was always ready, and apparently gratified to preach in any place or circumstances, in which he could be easily and fully heard. I once accompanied him when he went, I believe on his own voluntary offer, to preach to the convicts, in the public prison of this city; and I was never better pleased with any sermon that I heard from him, than that which he delivered on this occasion."

"In Theology, Dr. Nisbet was a decided Calvinist, of the old school, and deeply read in the writings of its most distinguished masters. Yet he was not intolerant of other denominations, if they held what he regarded as the fundamentals of religion. I never heard him speak with severity of any religious sect, except the Universalists. Of an individual of that sect, whom he believed to be a very bad man, I once heard him say, 'His is the only good rogue's religion. He knows, if that dont save him, he has no chance at all.'"

"Of his general character as the President of a College, I know but little. Living at the distance of one hundred and twenty miles from Carlisle, and having visited it but once during his presidency, and that at a time of vacation in the College, I had no opportunity to make any observations for myself. I have always understood, that in the business of instruction, he never failed to perform with ability, diligence and punctuality, every duty to which he was pledged. I also know that he was greatly dissatisfied with the hasty and imperfect course of study, which he found himself obliged to tolerate; and that he gave great umbrage to some of the Trustees of the Institution, by the severity of the remarks which he made, on the disposition which he believed they

cherished, to favour a superficial system of education."

"In like manner, I must state, that I know but little, from personal observation, of Dr. Nisbet's domestic character. I have uniformly heard him represented as peculiarly amiable and kind, not only in his family, but in all his intercourse with others, in private life. When the General Assembly met at Carlisle, in 1792, he invited a company to dine with him, of whom I was one; and this, as far as I recollect, was the only time, except on the following Lord's day, that I ever made a part of his domestic circle. The dinner party to which I have referred, was received and treated in a handsome style; and at its close, the Doctor indulged his witty and satirical vein, beyond any thing that I had before witnessed. At other times, it had broken out by flashes, with distinct intermissions; but it now blazed forth in a coruscation, with only fitful abatements, for more than an hour."

"I conclude my reminisences of Dr. Nisbet, with stating, that he was a man of as much genuine integrity as I have ever known. Whatever were the subject, he abhorred, and denounced in unmeasured terms, all hypocrisy and all disguise. His own sentiments and feelings he disclosed with the simplicity of a child. Had he been more reserved, perhaps he he would have been more happy; but he had no talent for concealment."

"Respectfully and affectionately,"

"Yours,"

"Ashbel Green."

"*Rev. Dr. Samuel Miller.*"

The following letter from the Rev. Dr. Brown, President of Jefferson College, Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, will show the estimation in which the subject of this Memoir is held by another highly respected head of an important literary Institution.

"*Canonsburg, June* 29, 1840."

"*Reverend and Dear Sir,*"

"I have a very high regard for the memory of Dr. Nisbet. It was my privilege to enjoy the benefit of his instruction, for several years, while a student at College. I have an entire copy of all his college Lectures as he delivered them. Afterwards I studied Theology under his direction, and was favoured with the reading of the manuscript Lectures which he delivered previously to a Theological class.

"Dr. Nisbet was certainly a very extraordinary man. He appeared to have read and studied every thing, and to have forgotten nothing. He seemed at home on every subject; to be familiar with all distinguished writers, ancient and modern; and to be extensively and accurately informed on every department of literature. He was master of at least twelve* different languages, and could write and converse in most of them with ease and fluency. In Latin particularly he could converse and write with great facility and elegance. As President of the College, when present at the recitations or examinations of the different classes, he appeared perfectly familiar with

*In a subsequent page the number of languages with which he was familiar, is represented as *nine*. That representation was intended to be strictly within bounds. Dr. Brown thinks the number was greater.

every department, mathematics, the natural sciences, and languages, as well as his own peculiar department. He was so perfectly familiar with the Latin and Greek classics usually studied in College, that "without book," he could hear a recitation, and correct the slightest error. He appeared to have the whole committed to memory. The power of his memory was altogether extraordinary. 'The Task,' a favourite poem with him, he was said to have committed to memory perfectly by two readings. He could quote and repeat, with a familiarity truly wonderful, most of the great Poets, Latin, Greek and English.

"In Theology and the sacred Scriptures his knowledge was extensive and profound. When I commenced the study of Theology under his care, he directed me to read and study the *Scriptures*, at first 'without note or comment;' and when any difficulty occurred, to note the passage and present it to him, at the time appointed for meeting him. The moment he took the paper in his hand he seemed to anticipate the whole difficulty, referred at once to the connection, and commonly repeated literally, and with the utmost readiness, the whole context; and was prepared to throw the most satisfactory light upon it."

"It was my privilege to sit under his ministry for several years. But I can give you no new information on this subject, as you had the same privilege, though for a shorter time. After I became familiar with his Scotch dialect and tone, I was delighted with him as a preacher. There was, as might have been expected, in his discourse a rich fund of thought expressed

with peculiar vivacity and force of language; and when exposing error and vice, accompanied with a vein of satire for which he was so remarkable. His sermons, you know, were not written; but they were very systematic, and always well arranged. He had a singular command of that exhaustless fund of ideas with which his mind was stored. When I heard him in Carlisle, he seemed to limit himself exactly to an hour, in every discourse, by the watch. But this limitation of himself to the hour did not seem to destroy, or even to affect, the proportion or harmony of the different parts of his sermons."

"His plan of instruction in College was by Lectures, which the classes were expected to write in full. He delivered them with so much deliberation and with such pauses, that, after some practice, we were able to take down the whole. I have a full copy of all his lectures taken from his lips as he delivered them. There were, however, few classes, all the members of which would consent to sustain the labour of doing this. His lectures were thought by some to be too voluminous; but they were exceedingly rich, and excellent in their kind. Besides a thorough and philosophical investigation of his subject, it was always illustrated by appropriate anecdotes, characterized by that wit and vivacity for which he was so distinguished. He seldom finished a lecture without some exhilarating anecdote, and some brilliant flashes of wit and humour, electrifying the whole class."

"It has been often alleged that men who are remarkable for *memory* and *wit*, are commonly deficient in judgment, and the power of close reasoning

and investigation. This remark, which has almost passed into a maxim, was not exemplified in the case of Dr. Nisbet. His Lectures on Metaphysics, on Mental Philosophy, and on the most difficult subjects in Theology, exhibit a mind capable of the closest reasoning, and the most discriminating and profound investigation, whilst at the same time his lucid style, and striking illustrations, throw an interest around those subjects which are usually considered as dry and unattractive."

"And here I cannot forbear to give a little specimen of what I mean, extracted from one of his Lectures on Logic. After treating on several sorts of syllogism and modes of argumentation, he added:"

"Besides all the modes of argumentation already mentioned, there is another more ancient and much more in use, than any of the rest. This is commonly called the *argumentum bacculinum*, or *club* argument, and consists in using force in bringing others over to our opinion. But all other methods of reasoning ought to be tried before this is used; yet in all governments this mode is absolutely necessary for supporting the honour of the laws; and indeed all government is only a jest without it. But it is not only the nerve of authority, but the soul of war. Whence *Louis* the 14th caused this inscription to be engraved on his cannon—*Ultima ratio regum.* There are some men of a nature so stupid that this is the only mode of reasoning that has any weight with them; and others are so stubborn that even this mode of reasoning cannot change their opinion; but it has this convenient quality that, when it is vigorously applied, it either silences or

convinces. It has the same property as the *dilemma*, viz. that it is apt to be *retorted;* and if the person who uses it, has not a force superior to his respondent, he runs the risk of being confuted; because this mode of reasoning is of all others the most infectious, and apt to be catched by the respondent, the moment that it is used against him, which ought to make young men very cautious in the use of this argument, lest they give their respondent an opportunity of refuting them. But the most warrantable and safe use of this mode of argumentation is when one acts as a respondent; and this is the only justifiable use of it in private life. There is no mode of argument in which mankind are more liable to be licentious and disputatious. Young men in particular are very prone to the use of it, though generally forbidden by their teacher; and, indeed, they ought not to be allowed the use of it until they are acquainted with the rules of logic, so as to know its proper place, and the cases in which it ought to be used. Of all modes of reasoning this is, undoubtedly, the most generally used. Hence all history is full of it; on which account it may be reckoned surprising that *Aristotle* has said nothing about it in his *Organon;* and it was probably owing to this omission that his pupil, Alexander the Great, was so licentious in the use of it."

"It is remarkable that although, in the common mode of syllogistic disputation, there is nothing so difficult as how to find a good *middle term*, on the contrary, in this way of disputation, there is nothing so easy. Almost every thing has been used as a middle term in this method of disputation. Hence

Virgil says, *Furor arma ministrat*, because a stone a stick, a fire-brand, or almost any thing within one's reach, may be used as a middle term. School-masters make use of their ferula for this purpose, and boys of their fists; and Horace tells us that the Thracians made use of their drinking cups by way of middle terms:—and the moderns have imitated their example by using bottles and glasses for the same purpose. As it is necessary in disputation that the same person should not at once act as opponent and respondent, this gave rise to the shield, the hemlet, and the coat of mail, which served the same purpose to the disputant as the denial of any of the premises in ordinary logic, the effect of which is to render the argument on the other side useless. But since the invention of gunpowder, a new kind of middle term has been introduced, which renders defensive armour entirely useless. But the *argumentum bacculinum* is safest in the hands of the civil magistrates, because private persons are apt to use it with indiscretion. Young men ought not to be licentious in the use of any sort of argument; but they ought to be especially cautious in the use of the *argumentum bucculinum.*"

"The moderns have introduced into their logic, an argument unknown to the ancients called *argumentum ad crumenam*, i. e. an argument addressed to the purse, which, however fashionable, has nothing to recommend it, because it has no tendency to produce conviction. It may embarrass a *poor* respondent, but cannot convince his understanding. Besides, this mode may also be retorted."

"Another mode of argument is the *argumentum*

juratorium, or attempting to demonstrate a conclusion by oaths, instead of premises and middle terms. This kind does not admit of any rule, being really a breach of all rules, and commonly as unfriendly to truth as it is contrary to delicacy and propriety. Besides, swearing in common conversation has been observed to be almost inseparably connected with lying; so that one may pick out the lies out of any mixed discourse, without any other guide than the oaths by which they were accompanied. The fact is, when a man is conscious that he is speaking the truth, he will never suspect that it needs to be confirmed by an oath; whereas, when he knows that he is telling a lie, it is more than probable that he will swear to it."

"I am doubtful whether there is any thing in the foregoing reminiscences which will be of any use to you, or which you do not know quite as well already. If any thing has been suggested which has heretofore escaped your notice, it will give pleasure to him who is very respectfully yours,"

"M. Brown."

"*Rev. Dr. Miller.*"

More than thirty four years ago, when a plan had been formed for writing the life of Dr. Nisbet, which was afterwards, for several reasons, for a time laid aside, several ministers of the Church of Scotland were requested to furnish materials for that purpose. On that occasion, the following letter was received from the Rev. Dr. Samuel Martin, of Monimail, a very respectable and worthy Pastor of that Church, which it is thought proper to give at large. A part

of the first paragraph was before quoted; but for the sake of the connexion, it is judged best to present the whole letter at one view.

"*Monimail, June* 13, 1805."

"*Dear Sir,*"

"You apply to one who is very willing to contribute his part for doing honour to the memory of our friend, Dr. Nisbet. But, alas! I am not so well qualified for this purpose as you seem to think. Assuredly there are many who could furnish you with much more ample details respecting his life and its various events than I can, and who had better access to him, and more ability to estimate his character and endowments than myself. To show you, however, that I respect Dr. Nisbet's memory, and that I wish to oblige you, I shall frankly communicate, on the spur of the occasion, what occurs to my recollection, as interesting, and worthy of being recorded in a Memoir of that eminent man."

"To go back, chronologically; perhaps the first time that I distinguished Mr. Nisbet, was in the Divinity Hall at Edinburgh. Dr. Hamilton, our worthy and learned Professor, had appointed the impugning and defending a Thesis, according to mood and figure, in Latin. The Doctor was an excellent Latin scholar himself, and seemed to be as much at his ease in Latin as in English. The shrewdness and ability, the command of argument and of language in Mr. Nisbet, struck me much in those days. This disputation was the more memorable, because it was the only one I witnessed in the Theological Class. I suppose the practice about that time—1757

—or 1758—was becoming obsolete; though it is kept up still, I believe, in some Presbyteries, in the licensing of preachers, and in the secondary trials, before ordination, in our Church."

"His command of Latin, which, at that time I admired, suggests to me the mention of his astonishing memory. In this faculty, he exceeded all men that I ever knew. A son of mine had returned from his first session in the University of St. Andrews, when Dr. Nisbet paid a visit to the Earl of Leven's family, and therefore was with me.* He asked the boy what he was reading? He told him, such a book of Homer. The Doctor then began, and recited many lines of that book, without the least hesitation. I asked him how it was possible that such a quantity of Greek could remain in his mind? He replied, 'that he did not well know; that he read them, and they stuck.' He assured me that he could once have repeated the whole Æneid, and Young's Night Thoughts. In his quotations from the Classics, and from modern books, I had occasion often to admire the strength of his memory, and the appositeness of his references. Butler's Hudibras seemed to be perfectly familiar to him, and was often quoted with happy effect. He was fond of wit, and the wit conjoined with the learning of Hudibras, could not fail to please him. Like other wits, he could be playful, and descend to a play on words, very happily. For example, I carried him, one night, through intricate paths and windings, to him, at least, intricate and a

* Mr. Martin was, for some time, a Chaplain in the Earl of Leven's family.

labyrinth. At the end, he exclaimed—"O Martin! you will make an excellent commentator; you carry one safely and skilfully through dark passages."

"Dr. Nisbet's appearances in the General Assembly attracted my notice long before I was introduced to his acquaintance. They were distinguished by acuteness, and learning, and wit, and happy quotations, and quaint allusions. He felt strongly. One of his best friends used to say:—"*Quicquid vult valde vult.*" He was, therefore, I suspect, sometimes too severe on his antagonists in his opinions, his conversations, and his public speeches. His speeches generally were short. He was far from being declamatory. Weak nerves and diffidence appeared in his utterance; but his matter was excellent; full of point, of argument, and of happy illustration. The Docter had given offence to some by quoting Scripture in the General Assembly. The violent settlement of a minister, under the "Patronage Act," against the will of the congregation, was the subject before the Assembly. Two members had made flaming and menacing speeches in favour of the settlement, and reprobating, in strong terms, the sentence of the Synod refusing to let the presentee be placed. After the preceding speakers had done, Dr. Nisbet stood up, and spoke as follows:—'Moderator, I was afraid the two last speakers would have called for thunder and lightening to fall on us and consume us. I have been often blamed for quoting Scripture in this house. I shall not trouble you with it just now; but will repeat (glancing an eye at the friends of Mr. Home, the celebrated author of the Tragedy of Douglas,) a few lines from

Shakespeare, which, perhaps, will be more to the taste of some gentlemen.

"Could great men thunder
As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet;
For every pelting petty officer,
Would use his heaven for thunder; nothing but thunder.—
Merciful heaven!
Thou rather, with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt,
Split'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak,
Than the soft myrtle: But man, proud man!
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastick tricks before high heaven,
As make the angels weep———."*

"This electrified the Assembly; and by such means he often carried his point."

"After I came to Fife, in 1776, I had frequent opportunities of meeting with Dr. Nisbet, in the company of our common friend, Dr. Snodgrass, then minister of Dundee. They were congenial spirits in many respects. We enjoyed 'solid nights,' as Dr. Snodgrass phrased it; rich with anecdotes, enlivened with wit and learning, and *seria mista jocis*. Our union, however, became closer after he was introduced into the acquaintance of the Earl of Leven's family, and was a frequent visitant at Melville House. But I may say, in truth, our union became closer still, after he went to America. I had urged him exceedingly not to cross the Atlantic. I discovered a degree of zeal on the question of his accepting or declining of the invitation to be the President in

* Shakespeare—*Measure for Measure*—Act II. Scene II.

Carlisle College, which showed to him that I was greatly interested in him and his family. I suppose it was in some measure on account of the manifestation of this interest, that I was favoured with many long and very entertaining letters from America, as one of his friends, to whom he took pleasure in unbosoming himself without restraint. His espistles were always highly grateful to me, and full of *Nisbetiana*. The greatest number of them I have preserved; and did delicacy and duty permit freedoms of this sort, which I think they do not, they would, from the press, furnish the public with a very entertaining collection. They are conversations, unpremeditated; one topic slides into another; sometimes, however, the transitions are abrupt and unexpected. From his correspondence, though I had not known him in any other way, I should feel myself warranted in pronouncing Dr. Nisbet an excellent man; a sincere Christian; a true patriot; a warm friend; and strongly, very strongly attached to the interests of religion, and of mankind. His attachments to Great Britain seemed to increase with his years and his experience. He held revolutionary, and especially Gallican principles, in utter detestation. He considered the strength and triumph of Great Britain, in her contest with France, as, under God, the hope of the world. The 'Grand Republic' was the object of his aversion and horror. The transition from outrageous Republicanism, to the abject servility of the slaves of an upstart Usurper, he considered as, at once, ridiculous, contemptible, and completely degrading. The doctrines of Deists, Socinians, and other innovators, were as much abhorred as the levelling doctrines of

the infamous Paine, and of his disciples, whose blasphemies had deserved no notice or reply, but for the unhinging spirit of democracy and impiety, which had crept forth at the time, under the specious appearances and names of 'Philosophy,' the 'Rights of Man,' and general 'Philanthropy,' and 'Illumination.'"

"By distance of time and place, Dr. Nisbet's interest in his friends in Great Britain seemed to increase. 'When I see,' said he in one of his letters: —'When I see the sun, moon and stars passing over me, I am ready to envy them, and to ask them concerning my Friends whom they have so lately visited and are so soon to see again.' In the act of shutting his windows, he had happened to think of his friends at Monimail: 'Ever since,' says he, 'I think of you, and pray for you when I shut my windows at night; and so I have connected the remembrance of my friends with particular objects and incidents; and thus I feel myself among them; though I do not just go the length of saying, *Sancte Martine, ora pro nobis*.'"

"Short and hurried as my sketch is, and, therefore, imperfect, it is all that my knowledge and circumstances admit of; and perhaps all that the limits you can allot for a communication of this sort, can receive. Such as it is, you are welcome to it, and may dispose of it as you please. Others may furnish you with a more perfect account; but none with a more sincere regard for the character of Dr. Nisbet, than *his* friend and admirer, and *your* obedient humble servant," "SAMUEL MARTIN."

"*The Rev. Dr. Miller, New York.*"

The foregoing communications will satisfy every reader, if he were not before informed of the fact, that Dr. Nisbet's *intellectual powers* were of a very high order. That his *memory* was all but prodigious, and his *wit* seldom equalled, all who knew him, with one voice conceded. His memory ex-extended to *words* as well as *things*, and seemed to serve him without effort, on all occasions. This being the case, some may be ready to doubt whether a mind so remarkable for the power of recalling past impressions, and of tracing unusual and striking associations of ideas, would be likely to be a sound or strong reasoner. But his power in the Judicatories of the Church, and many of his sermons, as well as several things which have appeared from his pen,—especially his Review of the System of Mr. John Wesley, before referred to,—clearly evinced that his reasoning powers, as well as those of retention and imagination, were remarkably clear and vigourous. The rapidity as well as the vigour of his mental operations, was noticed as striking by all who conversed with him. If *controversy* had more strongly called his reasoning talents into exercise, there is every reason to believe there would have been a display of them of the most honourable kind.

In *love of knowledge*, and in *solid learning*, this eminent man undoubtedly exceeded even most of those denominated the learned men of his age. He had been a devoted student from his boyhood. He read books, (as the writer of this Memoir has often had occasion to observe,) in half, if not one-third part of the time which it cost every other person he ever saw. And he seemed to forget nothing that he

ever read. Studies of this kind could not fail of leading to an accumulation of knowledge of the rarest extent and value. He seemed to have read every book, and to have studied every subject which the best informed person at any time in his company could ever mention. He, perhaps, more fully deserved the title that was given him before he left Scotland—*a walking library*—than any other man in the United States. Often, very often, when conversing in literary circles, after those around him had been listening, with instruction and delight, to the conversation of other remarkably well-informed individuals, the subject of this Memoir has surprised the company with an exhibition of learning on the same subjects of conversation so much more profound and discriminating, as to preclude all comparison with the attainments of any one else.

In what may be strictly called *erudition*, he was truly great. By this is meant a profound acquaintance with the ancient Classics; with the Fathers of the Christian Church; with the earlier as well as the later Historians; with the principal Theological writers of all countries and systems; with the history of knowledge; with the leading writers on the Philosophy of the Mind, Moral Philosophy, Political Economy, &c. On these, and the allied subjects, he had few equals. In what are commonly termed the *Physical Sciences*, though well informed, he was not so profoundly versed, as in the branches of knowledge just mentioned. He could, indeed, converse on almost all of them in an instructive and entertaining manner;—showing that his mind was awake to every object of knowledge. But it was evident that he

had not directed to them his early, continued and close attention. Indeed, when conversing on several of the natural sciences, he has been often heard to say—"The case is, all we know on these subjects is *just a few facts.*"

Dr. Nisbet's familiarity with the Greek and Latin classics has been already more than once alluded to. Of this many striking proofs and examples were continually occurring. A single one will suffice. Once, not long after his settlement in Carlisle, when he was dining with a select literary circle, a Lawyer of considerable eminence, who greatly prided himself on his acquaintance with the Latin and Greek languages, was of the company. In the course of conversation this Gentleman quoted several lines in the original Greek from Homer's Iliad. When he had finished his quotation, Dr. Nisbet said to him—'Well, mon, go on; what you've left is just as good as what you've taken.' The gentleman confessed that his memory did not serve him for repeating more. The Doctor then began where he had ended, and with the greatest ease repeated a considerable additional portion.

But his knowledge of *Languages* was not confined to the Latin and Greek. He was an excellent critic in Hebrew literature. He also read Freneh, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese; the two first named with perfect ease and familiarity; and all in such a manner as to understand the scope, and to relish the beauties of the principal writers in those respective tongues. Judge Brackenridge, late of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in an eulogy on this eminent man, partaking in some degree of his char-

acteristic eccentricity, but abounding in just and excellent thoughts,—remarks that "he was not only a master of the French language, so as to speak and write it with entire facility; but that he also had such an acquaintance with the Italian as enabled him to read some of the best compositions in that language with pleasure; and so much knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese, as to read *Don Quixotte* and *Camoens* in the original." Here were *nine* languages possessed and used by one man. And although, as is well known, there have been examples, in ancient as well as in modern times, of much larger attainments in the department of language; yet it may be doubted whether there have been many examples in any age, of a man skilled in so many languages, who, at the same time, had acquired so large an amount of other and richer knowledge. To the acquisition of some of these dialects he did not apply his mind until late in life; and in making his acquisitions in this field, he proceeded almost entirely by his own unassisted efforts, without enjoying any of those facilities which much travel, large libraries, and the constant society and aid of great linguists, so richly afford.

As a *Preacher* Dr. Nisbet's excellence was great and peculiar. In early life he was in the habit of preparing for the pulpit by writing a portion, and sometimes a considerable portion, of what he intended to deliver. But it was only on special occasions that he wrote the whole. What he wrote, he commonly committed to memory, which, with him, was a very short and easy process. Two, or at most, three readings of that which had been recently written, would enable him to repeat it verbatim. He

was probably never known to carry a paper, or any kind of help to his memory into the pulpit. Such a mind needed no such aid. After he came to America, he wrote but two Sermons; one at his inauguration as President of the College, which was printed; and the other on the death of Washington, which, though solicited by many to be published, was never committed to the press.

In the later periods of his life, when the writer of this sketch had an opportunity not only of hearing him, but also of being much with him in private, his preparation for the pulpit seemed to cost him very little labour. Indeed, there appeared to be no particular portion of time set apart for it. Even the members of his own family never knew when it was done. The truth is his mind was so richly furnished with knowledge; his memory so extraordinary; his imagination so much under his command; and all his powers so prompt and obedient to his will, that it seemed almost as easy for him to preach as to breathe. Nor was his preaching by any means of that common place, declamatory character which too generally belongs to the extemporary speakers, in which words are more abundant than thoughts; in which a few grains only of wheat are to be found in bushels of chaff. On the contrary, his sermons abounded in thought, always instructive and weighty; often new, striking and deeply interesting.

His *delivery* in the pulpit was not remarkably graceful, or conformed to the rules of art. His voice was small, scarcely sufficient to fill a large house, without extraordinary effort. He made very little gesture. He seldom rose to much vehemence; but

poured out a flood of precious truth, good sense, and unaffected piety with a uniformity, and solidity which never failed to fix and reward the attention of those who were more intent on richness of thought, and sound theological instruction, than on the ornaments of rhetoric, or the graces of a fascinating delivery. His style of speaking was remarkably clear, manly, unaffected, direct, and adapted to please all classes of intelligent and serious hearers. His powers of argument and of illustration seemed to be inexhaustible; and when the hour (to which his sermons were usually confined) was out, he closed, not from the least failure of matter, but rather from the unexpected and regretted failure of time. An example of the richness and variety of his resources in the pulpit was given in a former chapter, when speaking of his recovery from a severe illness, soon after his arrival in Carlisle. On another occasion, when visiting a friend in the ministry, that friend, having left the discussion of an important subject unfinished in his morning's discourse, Dr. Nisbet, in the afternoon, took it up, at the point where it had been left, and brought it to a close in a manner equally instructive and interesting:—and all this without retiring a moment for study, or appearing to devote any time to preparation.

As a *divine*, Dr. Nisbet was a *sound, old-school Calvinist*. He was a devoted friend of the Westminster Confession of Faith; considering it as a most lucid and happy exhibition of the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. The arrangement of his course of Theological Lectures was in conformity with the chapters of this Confession; and he constant-

ly inculcated the maxim, that, on the one hand, all who professed to subscribe it only "for substance of doctrine," were guilty of criminal deception; and, on the other hand, that none could subscribe it sincerely or consistently, but genuine Calvinists, or those who so far adopted the Calvinistic system, as to be decidedly opposed to all those opinions, in embracing which Arminians and Pelagians differ from Calvinists. All this was frequently evinced by the tenor of his preaching; and especially by his Review of the System of Mr. John Wesley; and also by manuscripts left among his papers, in which the subjects of "Moral Suasion," and the "Nature and importance of Creeds," are distinctly and strongly discussed. Nor was this soundness in the faith a mere frigid disposition to contend for a "form of sound words." Those who were honoured with his acquaintance, or who frequently heard him in the pulpit, can bear witness with what pious fervour he often spoke on these subjects, and how much his sentiments in regard to them evidently appeared to result not from simple attachment to forms, but from a conscientious and cordial love of the truth, and a deep impression of the importance of sound doctrine in its bearing on vital religion.

He also manifested as rooted and firm an opposition to "New Measures," as to "New Divinity." Several years before his death, when "new measures" were a novelty in the Presbyterian Church, the writer of this Memoir had occasion, in corresponding with his venerable Friend, to advert to the remarkable revivals of religion which, about the years 1800 and 1801, took place in several of the

Western States, particularly in Kentucky and Tennessee, attended with outcries, bodily agitations, and various extraordinary characteristics. In the course of that correspondence, a favourable opinion was expressed on the whole, of those revivals, by the present writer, amidst all the drawbacks and blemishes with which they were attended. Dr. Nisbet, in reply, gave a solemn warning of disasterous results; predicted that the issue of the whole would be to dishonour and depress real religion; and, while he admitted that some portion of good might possibly flow from them, expressed an earnest hope, that every friend of truth and order would frown upon them, as pregnant with mischief rather than benefit. He gave it as his opinion, at that early day, that, although the means employed might result in the real conversion of a few souls, the ultimate effect would be to drive intelligent and sober people from the house of God, and to multiply infidels.

As an *Author*, it has been already remarked, that Dr. Nisbet published little from the press. A number, indeed, of the productions of his pen appeared in the Magazines and Reviews of Britain, from 1756 to 1783; some of them known at the time of their publication, and others not known until afterward, to be his. But the only detached publication which bears his name is the Sermon before alluded to, which he delivered when he was inaugurated as President of the College over which he presided. The question has often been asked, why, in this publishing age, a gentleman of so much intellectual wealth should have had so little disposition to commit to the press the productions of his mind? The pri-

mary reason, no doubt, was his unfeigned and peculiar modesty. His acquaintance with the great works of learning and genius was so intimate; his standard of excellence in authorship was so high; and his impression of the difficulty of adding any thing worthy of perusal to the literary stock already possessed by the world, was so strong, that he was indisposed to run the risk of obtruding any production of questionable excellence on the already overburdened and glutted literary market. Accordingly, he resisted many solicitations to prepare for the press that which had afforded much gratification in the oral delivery. And when, in his last illness, he was requested to permit the publication, after his decease, of some of those Lectures which had been listened to by his pupils with equal instruction and pleasure, he received the proposal with manifest aversion, and refused his assent.

As *the President of a College*, Dr. Nisbet had many peculiar difficulties to contend with; but, amidst them all, he maintained an honourable standing in the estimation of all sober and competent judges. The learned *Melchior Adam*, who had some experience on the subject, long ago observed: "*Sceptrum illud Scholasticum, plus habet solicitudinis quam pulchritudinis, plus curæ quam auri, plus impedimenti quam argenti.*" So this great and good man found it. He was calledto preside over a College in its feeble infancy; the funds of which were never adequate to the support of its officers; a large part of the Guardians of which were by no means qualified to direct its affairs with wisdom or efficiency, or to second him in his efforts to

promote sound learning; and most of the pupils of which were altogether indisposed either to study, or to fall in with the plans which he laid for their improvement. He was really required to "make brick without straw." No wonder that such a College, however learned and able its Head, found insuperable obstacles standing in the way of its prosperity. The Board of Trustees was by much too numerous. It was composed of most heterogeneous materials. Some of them were persons of such views and habits as rendered them a dead weight on the whole establishment. Some of them took little or no interest in its affairs. Others were disposed to interfere with its management unreasonably and mischievously. Indeed, their interferences with the course of instruction, and between the Faculty and students, were so frequent and serious as essentially to invade the best interests of the College. Thus they weakened the hands of the President and Professors, and paved the way for vital mischiefs, in regard both to instruction and discipline.

With respect to one branch of discipline, that is, inflicting the penalties prescribed by the laws on individual students, the tendency of Dr. Nisbet's mind was to err on the side of undue lenity, rather than that of over strictness. His peculiar benevolence often led him—as some thought too often—to overlook irregularities and disorders, or to arrest the stroke of justice, when the interests of the College demanded that it should fall on the head of the offender. But, in regard to the discipline of his wit and sarcasm, he was the terror of disorderly students. Frequently, when the lash of the law either could

not be inflicted, or failed of making the proper impression, he could, by a single sentence of caustic wit, cover the delinquent with mortification and shame. Indeed, there is reason to believe, that, in more than one instance, young men were so deeply and painfully stung by an unexpected stroke of satire, or sarcasm, that they had no other refuge from the ridicule which it brought upon them, than to leave the College.

Dr. Nisbet, after he came to America, *seldom attended the General Assembly* of the Church to which he belonged; and, when he did attend, seldom took an active part in its proceedings. The reasons of this were various. The journey from Carlisle to Philadelphia, where the Assembly usually held its sessions, was neither easy nor convenient. He was generally obliged to perform it on horseback, which to one so corpulent as he was in advanced life, was by no means comfortable. But besides this, the great difference between the supreme Judicatory of the Church of Scotland, and that of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, could not fail of diminishing his interest in the latter. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, of which he was often a member, and in which, when present, he commonly acted a conspicuous part, at its great Session in May, attended only to the great and leading portions of the business; leaving the minor points, and the details of order to be arranged by the Commission of the Assembly, which sat at least four times in the year. The consequence was, that the meeting of the Assembly in May, was a great occasion, when the leading men of the Church

were brought together to discuss points of thrilling interest; when the great questions which divided the Church, were, from year to year, decided; and when eloquence of the highest order was annually displayed. From such a body, and from such scenes, it might be presumed that no one who could fairly obtain a seat, would allow himself to be absent. When the subject of this Memoir, in taking his seat in that body, found himself associated with such men as Robertson, and Blair, and Witherspoon, and Erskine, and Moncrieff, and others, both clergymen and laymen, well known to fame as masters of the noblest ecclesiastical eloquence, no wonder that he regarded the opportunity as, in every point of view, deeply interesting, both as a feast of talent, and as a contest for principle.

When he came to America, he found no such parties in the General Assembly of our Church as he had left in that of Scotland; such parties among us being of far more recent origin. He found, too, that questions of great and general interest seldom arose in our Assembly; and that by far the larger portion of its time was generally occupied in details of routine business, which, though very important to the order, union, purity and prosperity of a church, were not calculated to arrest the attention, and excite the highest efforts of the minds of its members. In these he felt little inclined, or even prepared to take an active part, and therefore, seldom put himself in the way of it. And even when he did take a seat in the Assembly, he found such a contrast, between the intensely interesting questions, and the constant succession of great speeches, which he had witnessed in his native land, and the general character of those which he

found in our supreme Judicatory, that it would have been strange indeed if he had attended on them with as much earnestness as in Scotland. Had he lived thirty years longer, he would have seen in our General Assembly as many stimulants to ardent zeal, and great efforts as he had left in his own country.

Accordingly, though he sometimes came to Philadelphia during the Sessions of the General Assembly, it was more frequently for the purpose of relaxing himself during a collegiate vacation, or of meeting clerical friends, than for taking a seat in the Body as a member. This was once humourously recognized by himself in a conversation with the late Dr. Mason, of New York, with whom he happened to meet on one of these visits. Dr. Mason said to him, in that free and jocular manner for which he was remarkable—"Well, Doctor, I find you sometimes come to Philadelphia during the Sessions of the General Assembly." "Yes," said he, "I am not a member, but I like to meet my friends, and see a little of what is going on? *Mason* —"But do you not sometimes go in to the Assembly, and listen to its proceedings." *Nisbet*.—"Yes, I sometimes go in for the *benefit of hearing*, and then I come out for the *benefit of not hearing*." *Mason*.—"Well, Doctor, which is the greater benefit?" *Nisbet*.—"Indeed, mon, its hard to strike the balance."

And even when he was a member of the Assembly, and felt it to be his duty to occupy his seat, he seldom took any part in the debates, except on special occasions, when something occurred in his opinion seriously wrong, against which he thought it his duty to bear testimony; or something ridiculous,

which tempted him to call into exercise his satirical vein. On such occasions his speeches were always short and pointed; and though not always successful in the accomplishment of his purpose, yet never failed to make a sensible impression. This impression was sometimes made by brief, dense argument compressed into a few sentences; but much more frequently, by an irresistibly ludicrous turn of thought, or by a single sentence, conveying a thought more powerful, if possible, than even direct argument itself.

On one occasion, when he was a member of the Assembly, the Records of the Synod of New York were under review. They were put, as usual, into the hands of a Committee, to be examined and reported on to the Assembly. The chairman of this Committee was the Rev. Dr. Green, who was always a great favourite with Doctor Nisbet. Dr. Green, in the name of the Committee, reported, that, among other subjects of remark, they found on the records of the Synod, a resolution adopted by that body, requiring candidates for the ministry to study *three full years*, after closing their Collegiate course, before receiving license to preach. The Committee did not undertake to pronounce this resolution wrong in itself; but brought it before the Assembly as an act censurable as directly militating against a distinct clause of the Constitution of the Church. When the report of the Committee was under consideration, several speakers took part in the discussion. Among the rest, Dr. Green, the drafter of the report, spoke ably, and at considerable length, in its favour. When Dr. Green sat down, Dr. Nisbet arose, and said, with an

air and tone respectful, but intensely sarcastic, "Mr. Moderator, I congratulate the friends of this report in having found in Dr. Green so able and eloquent an advocate of *the precious rights of ignorance*."

On another occasion, several years before, when the "Directory for the Worship of God" was under consideration, a Committee had reported a chapter on the "Solemnization of Marriage." In the formulary proposed by the Committee the following language occurred—"You, *Sir*, take the woman whom you hold by the hand, to be your lawful and married wife &c.;" and, "You, *Madam*, take the man whom you hold by the hand, to be your lawful and married husband, &c." When this was read, Dr. Nisbet rose and spoke thus—"Mr. Moderator, I do not like the complimentary terms, *Sir*, and *Madam*, which occur in this form. If I were to address such language to many plain people in the part of the country where I live, they would either stare with astonishment, or laugh in my face. This puts me in mind of a new translation of the Bible which I once saw. That passage in one of the Evangelists which says, 'a certain man had two sons,' the polite translator rendered thus—'A certain *opulent gentleman* had two sons;'—just as if none but *opulent gentlemen* ever had sons!" This created a burst of laughter in the Assembly, and the words to which he had objected were expunged.

To the *wit* of Dr. Nisbet repeated reference has been made in the foregoing pages. Of this Judge Brackenridge, in a eulogy already referred to, speaks thus.

"The wit of Dr. Nisbet was of the most genuine

quality. It showed itself chiefly in anecdote and moral observation. His anecdote of men and things was inexhaustible. The talent of relating *briefly* facts that illustrate a principle of human nature, or the character of an individual, or the history of a transaction, is a rare and most pleasing talent. Not less is that of repeating what has been said or written. It is not one in many thousands, even of the *literati*, that has the judgment to use the proper words,—to use no more than are sufficient,—and to present the fact or thought simply to the mind. It is a talent that is in a great degree the gift of nature, though it may be improved by art. But illiterate persons, in common life, are observed to possess it, in a great degree, when the most improved of the Academies are without it. An anecdote or saying may be ruined by the addition or the omission of a single word, and the most delicate taste, from nature, or from art, or both, is necessary to that terseness in which the excellence consists. 'Brevity is the soul of wit.' In this Dr. Nisbet excelled."

"To make the talent of wit a particular, and especially an ornament in a great man, may seem incongruous, were we not to understand the wit of a Sage, such as might become the banquet of *Plato*, or the conversations of *Socrates*. In that point of view, it detracts not from dignity, but rather adds to it. It is 'the feast of reason, and the flow of soul.' His combinations of ideas were quick and surprizing, to illustrate a truth, or to answer an argument, and expressed with, perhaps, a smile, but the laugh was left to others. I have never heard of his giving offence to any one by his wit, or wounding the tenderest

mind. It was evident that there was no vanity or ill nature at bottom; but a sincere desire to unite pleasantry and instruction. It was not a sparkling fire, but a playing light; and brilliancy rather repressed than encouraged. I do not know that *he* thought he had wit, or ever meant to use it; but his own mind presenting the incongruities of things, he seemed to give way to an expression of the assemblages which were upon his fancy, unconscious of the view in which he placed the errors which gave rise to them."

In the Christian's Magazine,* which the late Dr. Mason of New York, edited for several years, with so much honour to himself and instruction to the religious public, the following passage occurs. "The late Rev. Dr. Nisbet, celebrated for his profound erudition, and ready wit, being asked, How he would define modern philosophy? replied—'It consists in believing every thing but the truth, and exactly in proportion to the want of evidence; or to use the words of a poet, in making windows which shut out the light, and passages that lead to nothing.'"

Though the chief time and attention of this eminent man were bestowed on Theology, and the auxiliary branches of knowledge, he found abundant leisure to keep pace with the *current literature* of the age, and commonly appeared more at home in this department of reading than almost any of his associates. In Poetry, he had a remarkably fine taste. He not only admired, read, and had deposited, to a wonderful extent, in his memory, the best of

* Vol. I, p. 284.

the older English poets; but he was also equally at home in the writings of the purest and most respectable poets who figured in his own time. He was, in particular, a great admirer of *Cowper*, and could repeat, by memory, a large part of his "Task," and other poems.

As the wit of Dr. Nisbet was exuberant and inexhaustible; and as, on some occasions, adapted to call it forth, he could wield with power the weapons of ridicule and sarcasm, it might be supposed, by such as did not know him, that he was wanting in tenderness and sympathy. This, however, was far from being the case. On the contrary, few men were ever more remarkable than he for their feeling and benevolent hearts. Of this, the writer of the present Memoir has witnessed many striking examples. He will advert to only one. In the winter of 1791, the melancholy defeat of General St. Clair, by the Miami Indians, occurred, to the distress of the nation. A large part of the American army which was engaged in that expedition, had, on its way Westward, encamped, for a number of weeks, in the neighborhood of Carlisle, and became considerably acquainted with the inhabitants of the Borough. The present writer was in Carlisle when the disasterous event occurred, and had, for weeks before, heard the Doctor indulging his wit at the expense of the government of the United States, and of that army and its prospects in particular. When the news of its sanguinary defeat arrived, instead of receiving it, as those who did not know him might have expected, with more than his usual sarcasm, he was affected, melted, nay almost overwhelmed by the sad intelligence. If he had

lost any of his nearest and most beloved relatives, on that field of national disaster, he could not have manifested more deep and heart-felt grief than he expressed, not merely in a single short paroxysm of feeling, but for a number of days together. In short, it opened a view of his character as highly honourable to himself, as it was unexpected to those who were but slightly acquainted with him. Indeed his whole history exhibited him as kind hearted and sympathetic to a degree greatly beyond what is common in those who are popularly called benevolent men.

The *Patriotism* of Dr. Nisbet was ardent and unquestionable. That he was a sincere and warm friend of free government, none who knew him will deny. It is true, indeed, he saw, or thought he saw, much in the political disorders and excesses of our country, for a number of years after he came to it, which filled him with many fears for the stability of its government. On all that he saw he was wont to express his opinions with a frankness which became a consciousness of perfect integrity. These opinions were not always palatable to those around him; and sometimes, indeed, were incorrect in themselves, arising from that want of entire comprehension of the character and habits of the American people, which was natural and almost unavoidable in a stranger. In regard to these opinions, an able eulogy of this venerable man, published many years ago, and ascribed to a layman of the highest respectability in Pennsylvania, thus speaks:—"They gave rise to rumours as unfounded in fact, as they were disastrous in their results to the interests of the College,—that he inculcated political doctrines which

were hostile to republican government. On this subject the writer of this notice can pronounce with candour and accuracy, as he belongs to the party to which Doctor Nisbet is supposed to have been inimical, and was not only educated at Dickinson College during the period in question, but was also intimate in that gentleman's family; and he can assert with perfect truth, no man was a more sincere friend to rational liberty."*

The *domestic* character of Doctor Nisbet was eminently amiable and exemplary. In the relations of husband, parent and master he exhibited a bright example of the most vigilant fidelity, affection and benevolence. No one could enter the door of his dwelling without perceiving that his family was the abode, not merely of order and harmony, but of the most endearing attention and love.

Such was Doctor CHARLES NISBET—a truly great and good man;—endowed with various *intellectual talents* of the highest order;—in rich and solid *learning* excelled by few if any of the age in which he lived;—as a *man*, peculiarly amiable and beloved; as a *friend* and *companion*, interesting and attractive beyond all rivalry;—as a *Christian*, truly pious and devoted, an Israelite indeed; in whom was no guile;—as a *Divine*, profoundly learned, orthodox, and in every respect eminently furnished;—as a *Preacher*, not what the multitude call an orator, but solidly and inexhaustibly instructive, and deeply interesting to all intelligent and pious hearers;—as the *head of a College*, fond of instructing ingenuous

* Port Folio for January, 1824.

youth, large in his views, indefatigably diligent, and ever recognized as the father of his pupils; as a *Citizen*, truly and zealously patriotic;—and in all the *relations of domestic and social life*, gentle, disinterested, sympathetic, amiable and beloved.

Dr. Nisbet, however, with all these accomplishments, was not so well qualified as many inferior men, to meet the exigencies, and encounter the difficulties which attended his transfer of residence to America. The Countess of Leven was undoubtedly correct, when she intimated to him, in one of her letters, that he was not fitted to engage in scenes of hardy endurance and conflict. He laboured under a nervous timidity which rendered it difficult for him to meet physical danger with composure. He had no taste nor fitness for resisting injuries, or contending with the unfeeling or unjust. His wit too, not being always under the government of cautious reserve, sometimes led him to attack popular prejudices, or iniquitous actions in a style which many who did not know his sterling honesty and benevolence, were not always ready to excuse. To which may be added, that the first fifty years of his life having been spent amid European scenes and habits, he never acquired a facility in making such allowance for American scenes and habits, as the situation of our country really required.

The period at which he came to our country, was, perhaps, the most unfortunate that could have been selected for transferring the residence of such a man from the Old to the New world. It was a period, as we have seen, of immaturity, of disorder, of commercial derangement, of infant and struggling insti-

tutions, when few were prepared adequately to estimate literary worth, and fewer still qualified to patronise and sustain it. Of consequence, great as the subject of this memoir was, and was admitted to be, by all who knew him, both his reputation and his services would have been still more highly appreciated, and still more extensively useful, had he come a few years later; or had he found on this side of the Atlantic, as he would have found at a later period, a larger number of congenial spirits, and a more faithful fulfilment of the pledges which drew him from his native land.

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

Page 184, *l.* 15.

Dr. Nisbet was, at no period of his life, inimical to the character or ministry of Mr. *Whitefield*. On the contrary, he was a warm friend to the doctrines preached by that eminent evangelist, and considered his ministry as greatly useful. He did indeed regard some of the *measures* of that excellent man, especially in the earlier part of his course, as imprudent and disorderly; but these had all passed from public view long before Dr. Nisbet came to America. When the Countess of Leven spoke of his having a "bad idea of the *Methodists* since he went abroad," she evidently meant to use the term *Methodist* in the comprehensive sense in which it has long passed current in Great Britain, as including the adherents of Mr. *Whitefield*, as well as those of Mr. *Wesley*. Dr. Nisbet was, indeed, warmly opposed to the Arminianism of the latter gentleman and of his disciples; and he also greatly disapproved of the *shouting*, *falling down*, *groaning*, &c., so common in their public worship forty or fifty years ago, and no less of their decrying *learning* in the gospel ministry, as they habitually did at that time. The great change which has taken place in the Methodist body in regard to outcries and disorders in worship, and also in

respect to the increasing provision made for the literary training of their candidates for the ministry, is known to every one. Their preachers are now very seldom heard to declaim against a "book learned" ministry. But in regard to *doctrine*, had the venerable subject of this Memoir lived to this hour, he would have had undiminished reason to express strong dissent from that body. Were he now alive, and to go into a Methodist Episcopal Church, in many parts of our country, he would still hear *Calvinism* denounced by name in the most reproachful and violent language, as a "hateful abominable system," as a "doctrine of devils," &c.; and our Confession of Faith quoted in a garbled manner, and loaded with the coarsest abuse as the doctrine of Presbyterians. Is it any wonder that a gentleman of Dr. Nisbet's principles and character regarded all such things with the strongest disapprobation; and that in writing to the Countess of Leven after his arrival in this country, he should express that disapprobation in very decided terms? She evidently mistook his meaning, and considered him as having an unfavourable opinion of all *Methodists*, understanding the term in the British sense, as including all professors of a strict and serious religion.

Page 328, *l.* 16.

"*This electrified the Assembly.*" It is well known that, in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, more liberty is frequently taken in employing the weapons of ridicule, sarcasm, &c., and in

exciting and indulging bursts of laughter, than is usual in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. This arises from various causes. The Assembly in Scotland is a more *numerous* body than that in the United States, and of course harder to keep in order. In the American Assembly, *professional counsel* are never admitted to plead causes; but in that of Scotland, they are freely and constantly allowed to appear on behalf of implicated parties; and they often, in spite of every thing that can be done to prevent it, take unwarrantable liberties. Their very professions of respect are often mingled with sneer and sarcasm; and they have no hesitation in exciting, whenever it can serve their turn, roars of laughter. This is not only undesirable, but it is also in a high degree incongruous and unseemly. The author of this volume would leave it as the suggestion (he will not presume to say the *counsel*) of old age, and of some experience, that every thing of this kind ought to be avoided in ecclesiastical judiciatories. When the ministers of religion come together to transact the business of the Church of Christ, the very least that ought to be expected of them is, that perfect gravity, seriousness, mutual respectfulness, and brotherly kindness reign in all their proceedings. How revolting the levity, the unbridled merriment, the keen retort, the unkind turning a brother into ridicule, which are sometimes indulged! Such scenes have frequently been exhibited in Presbyterian judicatories, not only in Scotland, but in our own country, as would not have been tolerated in the better days of the Church. Our fathers, *Knox and Melville*, in their day, or

Henderson, Rutherford and Gillespie in theirs, would have "groaned in spirit," and poured forth the majesty of Apostolic rebuke, if they had been witnesses of many a debate, which, within the last half century, has passed without reproof. O that our sons may be, in this respect at least, wiser and more examplary than some of their fathers have been! What comfort, what dignity, what impressiveness would truly Christian habits in regard to this matter impart to our ecclesiastical Assemblies!

Page 341, *l.* 10.

On the page above mentioned, Dr. Nisbet is represented as "seldom attending the General Assembly." This may seem, at first view, to militate with a statement of Dr. Green in page 307. But the truth is, that from the time when the acquaintance of the author of this memoir with Dr. Nisbet commenced, until his decease, he seldom appeared as a member of the Assembly, and it is not recollected that he was in Philadelphia, during that period more than two or three times in the course of its annual sessions. In preceding years, with the recollection of which Dr. Green was more familiar, he had been in the habit of visiting Philadelphia more frequently at that season.

Page 342, *l.* 10.

When Dr. Blair is mentioned, among a number of others, as "master of the noblest ecclesiastical

eloquence," it is not meant that he was himself a distinguished speaker in the General Assembly. It is well known that he seldom opened his lips in that body, excepting to give a vote. But the character of a gentleman of so much rhetorical taste and skill could not fail of being highly exciting in its influence on all who engaged in debate in his presence.

Page 345, *l.* 4.

The reader will do great injustice to the Rev. Dr. Green, if he supposes, from the statement concerning that venerable Father in the page above referred to, that he is now, or ever was, a friend to a short and hurried course of theological study. On the contrary, perhaps no minister of the Presbyterian church has been more uniformly zealous and indefatigable in his endeavours to induce every candidate for the ministry under our care to avoid all haste in his professional training. On the occasion to which the above mentioned anecdote relates, he only meant as a member of a Committee, to present for animadversion the act of a Synod which was in conflict with the Constitution of the Church, and which, while that Constitution remained unaltered, he regarded as disrespectful and disorderly.

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